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CRW 3311.004

Spring 2014

Self Assessment

January 09, 2014

Self-Assessment #1

Poetry and I have a bit of a rocky relationship. It was my first love as a writer, though I admit that my skill level in the beginning was nothing less than horrid. I would write these angsty, sing-song poems and call it art. After a time, I think poetry had had enough of my torture because I haven’t been able to write even a passable verse since I was about seventeen. That was the age I discovered that I had a knack for fiction short stories that slowly evolved into novels. Unfortunately, I was never really exposed to many forms of poetry when I was younger (apart from the other amateur work on the website I was using at the time) so I never found my niche in the art. I’d love to be able to dabble with a bit of everything to find my fit, but I’m most interested in sonnets. I enjoy Shakespearean sonnets; I love their structure and their flow and the beauty they can embellish. However, I’ve been told I’m guilty of the sin of wordiness so maybe shorts styles would be good practice for me.

I’m fairly confident in my ability to read poetry and interpret it where appropriate, though I really hate poetry interpretation. If a writer decides that a wall is red, it doesn’t always imply that they harbor some deep-rooted passion or rage. Sometimes the wall is just red, you know? I don’t read poetry as often as I’d like, since I try to focus my attention on assigned reading during the semester. Pleasure reading has to wait for academic holidays, and then I try to cram in as many novels as I possibly can because I’m so starved for something colorful and chaotic.

As far as poetry’s “goal” goes, I don’t really believe that poetry needs to accomplish anything except offer a brief respite from reality. If a reader wants literature to *do* something for them, then read a book. Poetry to me is a memory, that taste that lingers on the back of your tongue when you smell your favorite food. It’s not the meal itself, but all the sense associated with it. A poem should almost be the Novocain for the brain, numbing you (however briefly) from the world around you because it’s a glimpse into someone else’s soul.

I’m most apprehensive about letting others read my poetry. I understand that it’s necessary for growth and development as a writer, but it’s so intimate. My writing is my heart, my brain, my perspective. I pour myself into my words and to expose those details of my soul to people I barely know is intimidating. I’m a shy person as it is, so my natural expression comes from writing. And even though my brain tells me that the class is a safe place, my heart tells me that my brain is a liar. It will definitely be a nerve-wracking experience.

By the end of the semester, I would like to be more confident in my skill set as a writer. I took this course in an attempt to become better-rounded and I’d like my abilities as a novelist *and* a poet to improve immensely. A successful semester to me would give me the confidence I’ll need in the future to openly share my writing without feeling attacked personally and to have a poetry portfolio that looks like an adult (not a third-grader) put together.