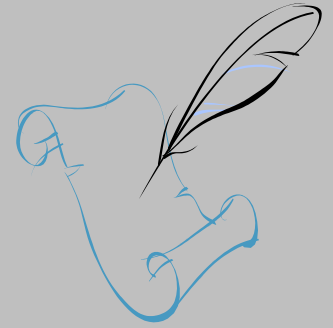


Poetry vs. Prose



By Charlie Anzalone
©2011

Robinson Crusoe was considered the first novel ever to be written. That was back in the 1700s. Before then there were plays, essays, and poetry, and plays that were done in poetic form. There were also philosophical theses, scientific writings, and written observations. However, poetry was used to tell stories. It usually had some form of rhyme and rhythm.

I have gone to many websites asking for some differentiation between prose and poetry. Not one site would explicitly state the difference between prose and poetry. Over twenty major poets gave what they thought it was. How? Not by example. Not by definition. Not even by description. What the great poets did say was how poetry made them feel in as many different ways as there were poets. Not one would say that there was any kind of rhyme or special structure.

Three sites also would not admit to any special form, yet, they went on to demonstrate poetry as a form of beats, rhythms, and rhymes without ever distinguishing between prose and poetry. Each one basically approached poetry by its example, never saying directly that prose IS what IT is and that poetry IS what IT is. One site did use an example of prose; then it demonstrated how to change that prose form into poetry. Guess what? The word order was changed, rhythm was added, and then there was rhyme, and still it did not distinguish the difference between prose and poetry.

For my part, I should say that if a word is not its definition, why have a dictionary? This may be a legal thing, or just a *don't-step-on-my-toes* and *I-won't step-on-yours* kind of thing, but I like to call something by what it is. If a word is not its definition, then, what is it?

Some artists may just chalk it off to semantics. Some may even say that this piece is a matter of Rhetoric. But when black is black, gray is gray, white is white, and all shades in between, rhythm, rhyme, and all in between, etc., then two plus two equals four. But if George Orwell's world is not far behind, then two plus two will equal five, and all lexicographers are all liars.

All of the sites would not say, or even reference words like rhyme or rhythm except that what they demonstrated was poetry: rhythm of some nature and, occasionally, rhyme.

Around the fifteenth century, blank verse came into vogue, but some kind of beat was always used. It was as if the poets had some kind of drumbeat in their heads. Music was their medium without the sound or tonal variation or chanting.

Some poetry cannot be appreciated because the form is visual; it must be seen and studied. The punctuation and the shape on the page must be seen to have any understanding or value. Some poems only have value when heard, for the value is the sound.

Some poetry has, as its foundation, much sophistry, referencing Greek, Roman, and Nordic gods and goddesses with many similes and metaphors with an occasional hyperbole. That indicates some bit of snobbery, a bit of intellectual ascension to lofty endeavors. Now, the sophists were a group who like to tell the biggest lies and to be believed, ergo, sophistry. A sophisticated person thinks himself/herself to be above the riff raff.

The other item that lends itself to poetry is the abundant use of picturesque words; words that have sound built into it; a visual in its use; a feeling evoked; or a taste or smell conjured up. But! Just putting words together for the sake of writing is not poetry.

During the sixties and into the seventies, there was much experimental poetry writing and recitation performed on stage in coffeehouses, local homes, and in parks. The Beat generation did much to advance free verse: no form, no rhyme, and no rhythm. Ginsberg, McReynolds, Ferlinghetti advanced the new poetry. For them, it was the power of the word, the force of its meaning, and the subject matter's affect on the audience. These guys and their followers attacked the political structure of their day.

Today, I have yet to read any famous poet who writes rhythm and rhyme. I mean, alive today. I must admit that I'm on shaky grounds, but I have been doing much research into the modern poetic form. About fifteen or twenty years ago, I discovered a new nomenclature for the new form: *Poesia*. I thought, "How appropriate." (I was going to use "appropo." However, this word, which I have heard so often, was not to be found in a college dictionary dated 1975).

The latest composite word for prose and poetry is *prosetry*. *Poesia* or *prosetry*: it is your choice. Just like synonym and energy equals synergy. Let us consider: artistry and poetry. Does that equal *partistry* or *artortry*? All is fair. Multisyllabic words are just many small words that make a sentence, that is, reporter (re = do again, port = carry, bear, wear, er = one who). Thus, one who carries over, in the case of port, it is a place, a weight, or writings, or news. One who repeats information for those seeking information.

To do justice regarding types of writing, one should consider two more. They are fragmented thoughts and streams of thoughts. It might be compared to the chaos theory. One must look into very large number sequences before one can see a pattern. There must be a theme within fragmented thoughts and streams of thoughts. And, of course, there must be some intelligent entity to comprehend word groupings. But most of all, there must be depth. There must be new understandings each time one reads a stream of thought.

However, putting words and phrases that have no connection within its contextual understanding can result in a word jungle. Only Nature can understand it. Because I can draw some memorable inks or great portraits in pastel or chalk does not make me an artist.

The arts: music, poetry, essays, drawings, architecture, writings of all sorts that have that extra dimension, that is that which causes something new to appear or to be experienced each time becomes classic. It is like seeing a movie that was not too comprehensible or enjoyable the first time around. Seeing it a second time, then a third time, begins to shed new meanings that were not originally seen the first time. Then, it begins to show its importance. Good novels that have meanings that are eternal and universal are always on call to new readers. Any art that does not have depth and universality goes out of style just as the pet rock did or stamps. Very few stamps have a universal appeal. Coins have a universal appeal because of their intrinsic, metallic value, and their age and number.

Some music can always find a revival and some only has value in its antiquity. The problem with music is that it is free. Unless one is deaf and dumb, everyone can write music. It is not so easy with art and architecture. Where does that leave all visual art? Jackson Pollack? Picasso? Kandinski? Muir? Money has lost ITS value. Have art, poetry, prose, lyrics, essays, music, photography lost their value? Or can we use the concept, "you'll know it is good when you see, feel, or hear it?" Now, that is pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps.

Perhaps, poetry can be defined with that same concept. "You'll know it is poetry and not prose when you see, feel, or hear it."

I am Charlie Anzalone in the year of our Lord MMIX. Na Maste.