

Aniah Matthews

4/18/22

Sulkosky

ENGW 105

introduction:

The original piece for this revision was a research paper done on the art of poetry. In the paper there are first hand accounts of a poetry event as well as research done on the history of poetry. The paper is a reflection as well on the experience from the event that was attended including things such as what was seen, heard, and read during the event. Along with the experience, people were interviewed at the event and included into the paper. The history of poetry section includes a variety of types of poetry and origin of where they came from, where people from all walks of life indulge in poetry in different forms. The audience for this piece was an anthropology class where we were primarily educating ourselves along with our classmates about a topic of our choosing.

Original draft:

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Icaza

5/8/19

Poetry is something that nearly every American child hears and many frown at the word. Growing up poetry is taught in schools and only recently have teachers began to tackle the teaching of poetry in new ways, which was not done in the past. So many young adults have voiced that they do not like poetry, never really knowing why. Maybe it is the way it was previously taught, in one article describing it as “playing pin the tail on the donkey” (stein 2010). Learning about poetry can be a difficult thing because setting guidelines for them is a challenge within itself. Growing up I didn't like poetry. I never seemed to get the tail where it needed to be so I took the opportunity to learn more and be able to look at why others have fallen in love with this style of writing and learn more about their culture.

The event that I chose to go to was called the blackbird poetry festival on Thursday, April 25, 2019. This festival that I went to was not at all what I expected. When I was doing my research I found that there are many different types of poetry festivals but I was not sure exactly what I was walking into when I attended this one. When I came in there were maybe about 30 people there total and the first thing I noticed was the age group, which was an older audience. I was probably the only person there who attended howard and most of those there were part of a couple, whether it was two women friends or married couples, but it seemed that everyone was there in two's. The next thing I noticed was that many women that were there had short hair cuts but when I asked most of them seemed to not even noticed saying “maybe it's just the poets look but I don't have to do much with my hair in the morning”. Although it was not very cold I saw many sweaters and glasses, this was to be as comfortable as possible to be able to enjoy their time.

When doing my research I found that in many poetry slams there is music, there may be food, and sometimes a deejay (williams 2015). I was kind of looking forward to this but

unfortunately there was no music but there was a host who was involved with the school and coordinated the event. She did not speak much because there were only two speakers who came on stage so she did not have to introduce much but in her introductions and speaking she incorporated poetry within that too using quotes and playfully introducing the first speaker, who was a student from Marriotts Ridge High School that recited a poem from her favorite artist. This poem was more of what I was used to hearing, she recited with passion almost as if acting it out and I really felt her emotion that she was displaying. After her poem everyone clapped, sometimes people would snap, but mostly clapping. The host then came up once again to introduce the main speaker who was Beth Ann Fennelly. I personally did not know who she was but she is well known in the poetry community. During this time she read her own poems, some of which she had written but no one had ever heard, and some out of her book. These poems were nothing of what I expected. Some were only a sentence, some up to two pages long. But all of them were very intriguing and I noticed some code switching going on within her writing. Even when she was reading the poem and just talking about the next one or where it originated from there was a change in the way she talked. Sometimes she would talk with slang or an accent and sometimes it was very formal. Depending on the tone of her poem or what it was about depended on how she talked, and how the audience reacted. She read a total of about 10 poems, one of them was about butter, another about her father in law who passed away. It felt like a very wholesome reading as we went on a journey with her learning about her life the good and bad. For the most part Beth Ann used the formal English language though the name for the festival also known as HocoPolitSo could be considered a jargon term since many people who are not part of the community would not understand it. After the reading there was the opportunity for a question and answer which was not very long there were only really a couple questions asked but

some of the questions were about her husband one was “do you and your husband read and critique one another's work?” or “do you feel you got wiser” Beth Ann was very appreciative and responded in ways trying to relate to the audience so we could really get a sense of what she was trying to convey and I noticed this throughout the whole time. Before she would start a poem she would always tell a little story about where it came from usually starting with “you know how...” relating to a common thing so we would know how she felt. After the question and answer was concluded there were refreshments and small snacks like cookies outside the theater for those who attended to enjoy and mingle and this was where my opportunity presented itself to be able to ask others in the audience about their experience. There was one man there that I noticed was taking notes, which made me feel a little less awkward about me taking notes but raised my curiosity as to why he was taking notes. When I asked, he told me that many people take notes to be able to remember the name of a poem to study or it might be something they want to recite and they can't find it anywhere else. But him specifically was going home to tell his wife about what he heard this day and he wanted to make sure it was all correct and he could remember enough for her to hear some of the poems since she could not come for herself. (key informant 1) Then I had the opportunity to talk to women about their experience and I asked them both the same two questions, “what made you fall in love with poetry” and “how does it make you feel when you write”. The first response I got was similar to one that I read about in the article “Every voice matters: spoken word in and outside of schools” (Williams 2015) when she was interviewing students one student mentioned it being something like therapy for him. When I asked this student at the poetry slam how she felt it was “...therapeutic and when it's good it gives me a confidence boost and I get so happy, almost like drugs in a way” (key informant 2) I could see the joy in her face when she was talking about it and how much she

enjoyed it. I then asked her what was it that made her get into poetry and she mentioned that “in elementary school we would write small poems and I was always praised for them” (key informant 2), which is different from what I have read in “why kids hate poetry” (stein 2010) where he talked about how many children were not exposed to poetry really until high school, so maybe my informant got lucky to be able to dive in at such a young age. Another woman I talked to for her it was a coping mechanism, where she did not have the communication at home she needed and this was her release. (key informant 3). This reminded me of the article about the prison slam because the men locked up were using it to be able to connect with others and cope with where they are as well as using it as a release. (Jocson 2004). In talking with key informant 3 we talked about how she admired and appreciated other people's work, she described it as “being in awe of how amazing other people's work is, being able to look at another perspective and know that I am not alone” (key informant 3). I see this being similar to many of the articles I looked at evoking emotion and bringing people together, specifically the article with the prison poetry slam (jocson 2004) and the children's poetry slam (williams 2015) where she also mentions “the beautiful thing about poetry is that you can control every element of what you need to say.” I really appreciated the opportunity to be able to speak to these people and be able to engage in their culture. After reflecting on everything I saw and heard that day I think it is safe to say that it really does not matter to this group most is what is written. The words are the main focus of this group and they work to respect and honor every word using them as their fluidity in their culture. Much like the article “Poetry” which goes into the history of poetry and origins how slaves used to use them to escape their reality (Bishop and Starkley 2006), it is so many and emotional escape from good or bad things they are dealing with. They use these words and

language to express themselves like that of a dancer and pens are dance shoes that carry them through the dance.

In the future I would need to do a little more research on different kinds of poetry readings and slams. When I arrived the host talked about how the whole day was poetry where Beth Ann taught and had a workshop and I really would have liked to be able to sit in on something like that and not just her reading. Also because there were not many people there I was limited on who I could speak to and who was willing to share. I also think I would have had an easier time relating to people of my age group. I did have a lot of fun in this experience and I really did find a new appreciation for poetry after hearing her poetry on butter. Doing further research like spending a day would give me more time to ask questions and even get more insight to her writing. It was difficult to decide what to include in my paper about the writer and the audience because many of these people could switch roles and do just the same, they all see one another as peers even if they are well known or “famous”. There is so much more to learn about this community, and one day with a few hours hearing only a few poems did not live up to what could be poetry's fullest potential.

BISHOP, WENDY, and DAVID STARKEY. "Poetry." In *Keywords in Creative Writing*, 125-31. University Press of Colorado, 2006. doi:10.2307/j.ctt4cgr61.29.

Stein, Kevin. "Why Kids Hate Poetry." In *Poetry's Afterlife: Verse in the Digital Age*, 188-203. ANN ARBOR: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

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Korina M. Jocson. "Snapshots: Beyond Borders: Poetry Slicing through Steel Gates and Barbed Wires." *The English Journal* 93, no. 3 (2004): 15-16. doi:10.2307/4128802.

Revisions:

For this revision it was more of a research paper, to add on to the research i would like to include a section on the mental effects poetry can have on people the sources i am using speak on the mental health of being able to release emotions through poetry as well as being able to track the status of your mental health. I would have liked to add on to the actual event that I attended however it was in person and there is no record to be able to refresh information about this specific event . The citations added are in APA format as this is normally what should be used, the other sources may not be in this correct format.

Revised draft:

Poetry is something that nearly every American child hears and many frown at the word. Growing up poetry is taught in schools and only recently have teachers begun to tackle the teaching of poetry in new ways, which was not done in the past. So many young adults have

voiced that they do not like poetry, never really knowing why. Maybe it is the way it was previously taught, in one article describing it as “playing pin the tail on the donkey” (stein 2010). Learning about poetry can be a difficult thing because setting guidelines for them is a challenge within itself. Growing up I didn't like poetry. I never seemed to get the tail where it needed to be so I took the opportunity to learn more and be able to look at why others have fallen in love with this style of writing and learn more about their culture.

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Throughout the process of learning about the art of poetry I came across a number of interesting influences that poetry has on people in correlation to the mind and mental health. In one article titled “poetry and healing” by Alicia Ostriker she talks about the ways of healing in poetry. For her she makes it clear that healing is not the same as a cure, but assists us in becoming “whole”. In the article she talks about her experiences and situations when she felt

helpless, in this case her husband was in the hospital and she found herself reciting poems to calm her nerves. This is something she carried over to her students, requiring them to memorize poems each week of their choosing (Ostriker 2018). As I read this article it became very clear to me why the use of poetry aids in healing. For most people it is understood that poetry is passionate and should make you “feel something” and the use of any form of communication since before even language was created was there to help one communicate how they may be feeling about something, because after all we are social creatures. Thus the use of language in the form of recitation or creation allows the speaker the space to feel how they are feeling through words and be able to unite with a community that has an understand as to what you are trying to relay. When doing my research I found that in many poetry slams there is music, there may be food, and sometimes a deejay (williams 2015). I was kind of looking forward to this but unfortunately there was no music but there was a host who was involved with the school and coordinated the event. She did not speak much because there were only two speakers who came on stage so she did not have to introduce much but in her introductions and speaking she incorporated poetry within that too using quotes and playfully introducing the first speaker, who was a student from marriotts ridge high school that recited a poem from her favorite artist. This poem was more of what I was used to hearing, she recited with passion almost as if acting it out and I really felt her emotion that she was displaying. After her poem everyone clapped, sometimes people would snap, but mostly clapping. The host then came up once again to introduce the main speaker who was Beth Ann Fennelly. I personally did not know who she was but she is well known in the poetry community. During this time she read her own poems, some of which she had written but no one had ever heard, and some out of her book. These poems were nothing of what I expected. Some were only a sentence, some up to two pages long. But all

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something like that and not just her reading. Also because there were not many people there I was limited on who I could speak to and who was willing to share. I also think I would have had an easier time relating to people of my age group. I did have a lot of fun in this experience and I really did find a new appreciation for poetry after hearing her poetry on butter. Doing further research like spending a day would give me more time to ask questions and even get more insight into her writing. Poetry is very interpretive and can clearly be used for a number of different things, it is easy to put it into a box and call it whatever was taught in school. In doing this project I was able to see that there is so much more to poetry than just words and it can even help you to better your mental health, in more than just one way. It was difficult to decide what to include in my paper about the writer and the audience because many of these people could switch roles and do just the same, they all see one another as peers even if they are well known or “famous”. There is so much more to learn about this community, and one day with a few hours hearing only a few poems did not live up to what could be poetry's fullest potential.

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