

How to Write Poetry

Bide your time for an inspiration. This takes skill, patience and good judgement as inspirations are not always discernable as such, and quite a goodly number of them tend to run up dead-end streets. When you have got a solid hold of a good one, limn out a novel as a vehicle to give flesh to your inspiration in full detail.

Put it away for a while to fester. Cast and re-cast your novel, and read and re-read it several hundred times. Then dispose of the characters and reduce your novel to a good, hard essay which clearly delineates the basic concept behind your inspiration.

Now the real work begins. Take your essay and remove all redundancies. When you are absolutely certain that no more words may be removed without triggering the collapse of the entire concept, take the words you have left and find, or make up, apt synonyms for them so that you can apply to them the discipline of some fitting rhyme scheme. As exquisite evidence of how this works, I quote William Blake:

*“To see a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm your hand, and eternity in an hour.”*

In rare cases, if you are really lucky and you have done your word removal judiciously, you will have a work with words so simple, eloquent and beautiful that you will immediately know that subjecting them to the restraints of a rhyme scheme can only be detractive, and therefore not desirable. In such a case, you can skip the rhymery and treat the whole thing as open verse; this has the added advantage of not having to compete with the likes of Blake.

And you're done!

Well, actually, you're not. It just seems that way until one day when you are re-reading the piece to re-impress yourself with your own brilliance and you spot the need to cuff some aspect of it into a better place. And so you do that. Repeat this exercise “ad nauseam” until you are so completely and unabashedly satisfied with the result that you are inspired to run it on expensive paper.

That is when you can be pretty sure you might have a good one. This feeling of euphoria will last right up until your next doubt about it. Then you start all over again.

And that's all there is to it.

Happy poeticizing!