

## Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Postmodern Poem

1. POESIS IS POEM-MAKING- emphasis on making, constructing, the artifice possible by exploiting language as material; no special privilege for expression; no favoring of "natural" effects or common speech; emphasis on process, not product;
2. LINEs' MEASURE - line, form, voice, speaker reshaped; reluctance to impose order via will or "imagination"; poem registers, measures as an instrument of perception or experience; organic form
3. FETISHES 'R' US- letter, word, line, poem, book; sound pattern, page dimensions, paper texture; poetry is active with meaning at all levels and composition may take all into account;
4. OTHERLY FORMS - neither the conventions of traditional (pre-given) poetic forms nor the naturalized or organic approach to free-verse entail the total possibilities of poetry, which can be a mode of discovery; if the medium is the message, then the medium/form must not be allowed to reify; it is never secondary.
5. CHANCE MEANS - courting of indeterminacy, multiplicity, plural meanings; turn away from "intention" as the locus of meaning and the compositional principle; less ego, more discovering for poet and reader;
6. ONE's SELF INCLUDES ITS ANTI-SELVES - exploration of poetic stances beyond the metaphor of voice; exchanging historical or visionary or cosmic or plural or partial stances for the "individual self", as a few of many possibilities;
7. The "I" IS AN OTHER - taking up social position as integral to poetics but seeing alienation as less pathological than an indictment of a sickly world; finding purpose and even ethical imperative in "speaking" from the margin, for the dispossessed, et al; form may be a performance of the unsayable;
8. (WORDS FORM A) FORM OF LIFE - imbibing insights from Sapir, Whorf, Wittgenstein, et al; the 20th century *linguistic turn* from metaphysics; language constitutes meaning, does not merely express it; vocabulary, grammar, all the facets of a given language construct a world;
9. PRISON HOUSE - grimmer consequence of the linguistic turn; recognition of the totalizing power of language systems, which constitute individuals with their structures and limits; think outside the box? with language as the one crucial box we cannot think outside and apart from; poems that rattle the bars of the cage and test its limits
10. LIKE nOT A SWOON - language brought to its senses; poem designated not in formal terms but for disorienting, defamiliarizing potential in reception;
11. THE PRIMITIVE "IS" COMPLEX - from anthropology, Stanley Diamond, through Jerome Rothenberg's ethnopoeitics; a general unsettling of ingrained notions of progress and cultural hierarchy (telos); contrary to the Enlightenment 'great chain of being'; in tune with ecological visions and counter to vulgar Darwinism;
12. CULTURAL WORK (ERS of the WORLD UNITE) - concept of poet as writer and poetry as produced by and involved with the social world; emphasis on the local, specific, perhaps immediate over aspirations to the Universal; proletarian rather than ivory-tower poetics;
13. LEGISLATING - poetry is in conversation with power, whether as unacknowledged legislation, legislation of the unacknowledged, or as determined refusal of 'power exertion,' often born of perception that world is a site of domination and cruelty, necessitating witness, challenge, critique, suspicion of norms and authority.

