

I tend to experience my thoughts as poetry. I don't mean it in an "I'm so deep way;" it's just that, due to things such as my synesthesia and general brain-weirdness, I tend to process information in a way that does not follow any sort of worldly logic. Poetry, to me then, is a pure leaking of thought onto paper-- that is, it's the closest we can get to accurately reflecting the weird illogical logic that exists only in our own minds. (I didn't come up with the "leaking" phrase; you can thank my high school Brit lit teacher for that one.)

Poems are this weird combination of visual, aural, and literary aesthetics. To that end, I really appreciate that Mark Yakich spends some time discussing the physical space that poetry takes up on a page. It's for that reason that I truly detest Walt Whitman, and it's okay if that's a hot take. Unfortunately, "Song of Myself" misses me on each of those points. It does not have a rhythm or cadence that fits comfortably in my mind's ear or out of my mouth, and the look of it on the page is dense and overwhelming. That's not to say that I don't enjoy a long poem, but it's the length of the words, lines, and stanzas themselves that are uncomfortable to me.

I think Walt's thoughts leak very differently than mine. The cool thing about the "pure leaking of thought" metaphor, though, is that literally everyone's thoughts look, feel, and sound different! I recognize that Whitman's style resonates with a lot of people; that's why "Song of Myself" is hailed as it is.

As for me and my house, I need less capital letters and more synesthetic nonsense. Give me Theodore Roethke (or Sharon Olds) (or William Blake) (or Patricia Lockwood) or give me death!

ADDENDUM: If you want more of my hot takes about how to define poetry, ask me about Rupi Kaur.