Welsh Metrical Tradition

Workshop with Dr Rhea Seren Phillips

Slide 1:

**The Welsh Metrical Tradition** is an ancient practise that uses consonantal repetition, rhyme, and stress to structure a line and/or stanza of poetry. The chief ambition of a poet writing using the tradition is to balance harmonies within a poem. Variants of the tradition can be seen throughout medieval Welsh literature, from its earliest inception to the twelfth century and beyond.

Slide 2:

**Sound poetry** is an artistic form bridging literary and musical composition. The relationship between sound and the written word has the potential to give poets the space to explore complex subjects using unconventional creative practises. The art form shares a strong connection with spoken word traditions.

To begin thinking about sound in poetry. I want to introduce you to the Snowball Technique and Lipogram.

As an ice-breaker, we’re going to generate new writing via this experimental technique using the chat function. The first name I call out will put a word in the chat. It must not have the following letters: W. The next person will add two words in the chat, and so on.

I encourage you to think on your identity. What foods, experiences, and/or cultures etc define you. (**10 minutes)**

Slide 3:

**First Exercise: Poetry and Emotions**

* To begin write three bullet points that define your identity. Consider your heritage and experiences. **(10 minutes)**
* Now, consider one emotion that was sparked by the talk on the Politics of Form in Black US literature. Write a paragraph or poem which centres on, and explores, that emotion.

You can use abstract words to express this emotion, such as in the form of lists, a sense which is connected to an experience (taste, touch, sight, sound or smell) or a series of sounds, as well as through traditional narrative poetry.

Focus on a time when you felt that particular emotion, and consider what you did and how you felt during that time. **(5 minutes)**

* Finally, using the three bullet points and the poem, highlight three key words and/or phrases. **(10 minutes)**

Slide 4:

**Second Exercise: Restrictions or The Past and the Present**

* Now, using the three highlighted words and/or phrases we will being to impose restrictions on the poem to focus as well as condense the language further: length and rhyme.
* Spend five minutes putting your key words and/or phrases into a seven syllable poem of three lines.
  + You can go back and use lines from your previous writing to fill out the line, but focus on the emotion in the poem for this exercise by bringing in personal experience of times when you were isolated from communities or family.
* Finally, choose three rhymes that complement your poem and add those rhymes to your first poem, either internally or at the end of the poem. Try to place them at key rhymical points of your poem, and consider the silences in these lines. Silence is your friend. **(10 minutes)**

Slide 5:

**Characteristics of Cynghanedd**

“Llew’s skull to jitter at its cull”

Skull | Cull Loose Cynghanedd Lusg (Rhyming Harmony)

“Mortimer snitch, Evesham snatch”

SN TCH | SN TCH Cynghanedd Draws (Bridging Harmony)

“a.ur.ae. a.sea. rose”

R S | R S Cynghanedd Groes (Mirroring Harmony)

Slide 6:

**Third Exercise: Cynghanedd Reflecting and Responding**

* Now, change the language to reflect characteristics of cynghanedd. **(20 minutes)**
* Finally, reflect and respond to your poem.
  + How did the writing process make you feel?
  + Did you enjoy the process? And, what did you struggle with the most? **(10 minutes)**