

Date 2, 22 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "Keeping Things Whole"Author / Director / Mark Strand

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I found this poem while browsing Shmoop for poems to log for poetic vision.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

"Keeping Things Whole" begins with a speaker in a field. He himself claims that his own presence in the field is "the absence / of the field." By this, the speaker means that where he exists, the field can't exist or isn't existing because no two things can occupy the same space at the same time. Next, the speaker begins walking, claiming that he "part[s] the air / and always / the air moves in / to fill the spaces / where [his] body's been." Finally, the speaker declares that he "move[s] / to keep things whole," as if wants the air and the matter around himself to piece back together after he rudely interrupted its wholeness.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

This poem is almost quite disturbing and sad in its implications. In the poem, the speaker is reflecting on his existence, which is apart from the day to day living by others. The speaker, presumably a man, feels such an extreme sense of loneliness and of not belonging that it ultimately leaves the reader dry, depressed, and desiring more from the person and from the poem itself. His presence is nonexistent as he believes that he merely takes up space where the field itself, or anything for that matter, does not exist, characterizing himself as simply a ghost-like figure displacing the air but then being displaced by air. He is aware that his presence is disruptive of nature so he keeps moving to keep his impact on any one place to a minimum. By doing this, he is keeping things whole rather than fragmented and fractured by his presence, as, wherever he is, he feels as if he is disturbing to those around him. The speaker ultimately has no positive thoughts concerning his being and existence and has clearly not attempted to reach his potentials in life.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"Keeping Things Whole" is written in free verse, following no rules of meter, rhyme, or form, and contains many mini lines that are seemingly arbitrarily placed on the page. Nevertheless, these breaks in lines help to emphasize the things that the author wants the reader to remain focused on as he is reading the poem. Absence is a prominent symbol within the poem. No matter where the speaker goes, he is seemingly not there, or absent, and his presence interrupts the wholeness of the environment where he happens to be. He seems to be under a constant threat of vanishing into nothingness if he doesn't keep moving. The fact that he keeps thinking of "being not there" reinforces his fear and anxiety of disappearing.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

"Keeping Things Whole" is quite an abstract poem, and it truly gets the reader to think outside of the box and in complex and intricate ways. Not only is the poem itself relatively difficult to understand because it is somewhat self-contradictory and paradoxical, but even when it is understood, the poem also leaves the reader feeling empty, vacant, and barren, just like the speaker himself, as if he or she did not derive any meaning or significance from the poem. I personally think that this poem is a tribute to the outcasts, or more specifically the ones who have a hard time finding friends and forming genuine relationships with others, in society, who often find themselves fading away in the shadows, because they are neglected and unrecognized by others. These types of people are the ones who feel obligated to make a move intermittently, to stand out in some way or another so that they are not so forgotten by society as a whole. This extreme level of isolation is also evident in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with the monster whom Victor created for the sake of his own knowledge and supposedly for the benefit of mankind. Unfortunately, the monster had no one with which he could form loving relationships, forcing him to resort to terror in order to attain attention and not to disappear from the sight and minds of humanity, especially not from the sight of his creator, Victor. Whether it be true isolation or simply feelings of inadequacy, the speaker of this poem leads quite an unpoetic life, a life separated from others and essentially wasted on accomplishing absolutely nothing. He has no reason to live, but he keeps on moving, quite depressingly, anyways because he feels obligated to preserve and maintain the wholeness of nature. Clearly, this poem is far from being considered even the slightest bit poetic, but there is one aspect of the poem that stands out. The poem, in a somewhat poetic way, truly forces the reader to think, to see the world, life, and matter in a new way and light, and to become better aware of themselves and their roles in society.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)