

Bringing a New Poet into Your Home

by Tantra Bensko

The new poet's poetic style, sensitivity, affiliation with publishers from guerrilla to grant-funded, and level of success should determine the methods you use to introduce him or her. You might have an easygoing academic poet who can mix with any writer, but a high-strung spoken word poet may be another matter entirely. If you don't know what to expect from your new poet, seek advice from her publisher, editor, or another reliable source before bringing her home. Following these simple guidelines may make the difference between an inspiring and jovial time, or a melee.

If you're trying to bring together a poet with only a few online magazine publications with one with many well reviewed books out, you need to manage defensiveness due to publications differences.

If you have multiple poets already and are adding a new poet, consider introducing each current poet to the new guy one at a time. The existing poets will have formed a pack, and packs are known to attack a strange intruder. This can be very frustrating for the new a writer and can cause him to give the other poets spiteful reviews. Introduce them if you can in the study or library as if has occurred naturally, watching for when the new poet has ventured out on her own to investigate her surroundings, so you don't stress the new poet.

Realize it's not only the males you need to watch out for. We know female poets who show aggressiveness to other female poets. They may be OK with male poets, but when other females come around, they respond dangerously defensively. If you have a female poet who has never encountered another female on her territory, or hasn't

been broken in by reading at open mics, she could be aggressive without your knowledge, but you find out when you bring home a new female poet and your home dissolves into utter chaos.

If you're bringing a new poet into your home, if you have other poets or fiction writers in the home, separate the new arrival in a bed-and-breakfast style situation for a few days. This will help her get her used to it, on her own terms, which is how poets prefer life. Poets tend to be sensitive to new environments, sounds, tastes, and scents, and are easily upset by change they don't understand. Put her pen and paper, computer and books in her private room and keep noise, demands, and other writers in her space to a minimum. Prepare for her arrival by having plenty of wine and mirrors on hand.

Never give the new poet free rein in your home until you're sure he is safe in the new environment, and that he and your other poets relate safely when you are gone. You may want to pretend to leave once or twice, peeking in through a window from a darkened room, to see how they interact. Never leave a new poet unattended with the pack until you've determined that the new arrival has learned to fit in with the other writers. Then, when you return home, check with the poet to see if she is OK, out of the hearing range of the other writers, as she may be intimidated to give the full report otherwise. If you feel she is exaggerating the report, threaten to take away all her flamboyant or black clothing, depending on her personality, for a week. However, you have to stick to the same punishment regularly so she associates it with the things she is doing wrong.

