

Thanks for sharing *Second City* with me.

Right from the start I trust that I am in good hands because of these opening lines:

*wheels turn, turn, and turn slopping green river*

*up under red iron bridges— the day held to burn*

*inside honey locusts until their yellow embers flicker*

I can see from them that this is a writer who understands and is using several elements of poetry and that increases my confidence that a good poem will follow.

For example the good line break choice at burn/inside and the contrasting of the two colors.

Some of those elements are working to speed me along. Another smart choice to keep the punctuation internal. The internal/end rhyme: turn/burn carries us along as well.

The poetry craft really hits a stride in the second stanza. I found the synecdoche, *the workers of apron and anvil*, very striking. Then you extended its music with *angel*, and gave us another nice rhythm in the repetition of “upon.” And then this unexpected language:

*your diamond could be cleaner*

*then aromas of apple, spice, and juniper*

Good stuff! That stanza works for sure.

Stanza 3 strikes a different tone. A nice place for a contrast in tone, I think. It gives the ear a rest and allows the previous lines to resonate a bit. It is a less musical tone; which is fine. I thought it might be interesting for the final stanza to rise to the musicality of stanza 2. Lots of sound connection. That way Stanza 3 would be

function as a sort of bridge.

I also just want more information in Stanza 3. Why would we relish this new city? A couple bits of description would help.

Finally, to directly address your question about punctuation. This is something I have worked through a lot in my own work and, what can I say? I have some opinions.

While the internal rhymes and puns do, I agree, speed us along they do not compensate for syntactical confusion. What I mean is, if I trip up as I read along because the words don't parse, the flow you are trying to get me to hear is stopped. I have to stop reading and look at those two words and puzzle with them. Is it worth it? Is the poet trying to show me something about those two words? If not, I've stepped on the brakes for no reason.

Now when you read it aloud, you can just keep moving through that syntactical confusion making it something that is fun and surprising to hear live. But it does not come off the page like that. It stumbles readers and I don't think that's what you want.

I'm going to guess that when you read this aloud, you punctuate. I think you should help a reader out and share that.

You might keep thinking about the title. I mean, it's fine, but just fine.

Thank you for trusting me with this. I think it is brave to reach out for some stranger's opinion. I hope you've found this helpful.