OISE, University of Toronto

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**Rituals**

**Workshop description:**

Our 90-minute creative writing workshop explores the creative possibilities rituals can offer us as we read contemporary poets exploring these same avenues and engage in our own rituals.

The purpose of this workshop is to expose participants to different ways of reading and writing poetry in community, and to think about the possibilities for poetry in our lives and classrooms. Today we focus on the ways contemporary poets **CAConrad and others** who incorporate rituals into their lives as poets in the world as we read their poems that incorporate ritual, and explore what considerations and possibilities this practice can offer our own writing practices.

We are grateful to be a part of a community that values engagement with writing and reading.

**Workshop outline:**

*(5 minutes)*

**Welcome participants & introductions / check-ins**

Names, pronouns, a word to describe how each person is feeling today

*(5 minutes)*

**Share the purpose of this workshop**: **To engage in rituals together… What is a ritual?**

- DEF ttps://www.etymonline.com/ : **ritual: (adj.):** 1560s, from Middle French ritual or directly from Latin ritualis "relating to (religious) rites," from ritus "religious observance or ceremony, custom, usage," perhaps from PIE root \*re- "to reason, count."

- DEF ttps://www.etymonline.com/ : **ritualistic (adj.)** 1844, from ritualist "one versed in or devoted to rituals" (1650)

- DEF https://www.dictionary.com/browse/ritual?s=t : **Ritual: (n.)** - an established or prescribed procedure for a religious or other rite; a system or collection of religious or other rites; observance of set forms in public worship; a book of rites or ceremonies.

-  We can consider: What is a ritual and why might someone engage in a ritual (writing or otherwise)?

-   What are the implications for our own writing when we employ a traditional form to explore a subject/ person/ place? What happens when we elevate subjects and experience to write about those subjects that are not traditional to the act of writing poetry?

*(15-20 minutes)*

**Read:**

* Excerpt from CAConrad’s “A Manifesto-Introduction to (Soma)tic Poetry Rituals” (Wednesday, October 9, 2019) from their website: <https://somaticpoetryexercises.blogspot.com/2019/10/a-manifesto-introduction-to-somatic_9.html>
* Sections in CA’s essay on poetry and rituals - rituals to try to heal from Earth’s death, etc., the sequence of the rituals resolving… <https://lithub.com/poetry-ritual/>
* Poem “rite” by Anne Waldman https://poets.org/poem/rite
* Poem & ritual from CAConrad’s book *A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon: New (Soma)tics*
  + “Emily Dickinson Came to Earth and Then She Left” & “Somatic 1: Anoint Thyself”
* Poem from CAConrad’s book *While Standing in Line for Death*
  + “Glitter in My Wounds” https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/148106/glitter-in-my-wounds
* Poem “The Lovers” by Timothy Liu <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57705/the-lovers-56d23b74887b3>

*(45 minutes)*

**Writing generated from visiting stations around the room:**

***STATIONS in the room:***

**Tarot / card pulling station**

* Regular deck of cards – pull three cards, and use that sequence of numbers, ex: if you pull 5, 3, 6 then come up with a 5 letter word, 3 letter word, and 6 letter word.
* Tarot reading/ pull card – Describe the actual scenes in the cards - what do you see, and then perhaps unpack what you think the card means to your own life.

**Shrine station (middle of table/ room)**

* Objects from participants’ bags into a shrine to look at/ write about/ comment on…

**Prompts from an envelope station**

* What is the story of the garments you’re wearing? Where did you acquire them? What memorable events have happened while wearing them? Maybe an important date?
* What’s the story of your favourite song? Include a lyric and don’t comment on it.
* Narrate a recent dream. Maybe even narrate it out of order.
* Record an early memory of your mother or father or guardian.
* Write about pleasure - include a colour, scent, and part of the body.
* Write out a text message you received today in full and comment on it.

**Window / magazine/ book/ photograph station**

* Look out the window - what do you see/hear? What do you not observe but sense happening? Do you see someone? What are they doing? Describe them in detail.
* Include a quotation from a magazine or book here and write with or against it (include a section of the quotation if you want).
* Pick up a book or magazine, open to a random page, and record a sentence or phrase (again, chosen at random).
* Press your forehead to the magazine/ window/ book/ photograph for one minute, and then record your impressions.

*(5 minutes)*

**Ideas for exit conversation**. **Participants invited to discuss:**

* What did you notice as you read and wrote? Were you surprised by anything in particular? Comfortable or uncomfortable with the ideas/ experiences expressed?
* Benefits / uses of reading and writing using rituals?
* Do you think you will incorporate rituals in your own classrooms? How? In conjunction with what texts/ ideas/ questions?

**Other resources**:

*https://lithub.com/why-are-writers-particularly-drawn-to-tarot/*

*https://www.typewritertarot.com/blog*

*https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=49530*

[*https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/timothy-liu*](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/timothy-liu)

*http://somaticpoetryexercises.blogspot.com/*