

(Soma)tic Poetry Rituals & the Resulting Poems

by CAConrad & Miguel Gutierrez

PART ONE:

Water molecules absorb sound unlike anything else. Our human bodies are 75 to 80 percent water. And fruit is 95 percent water. Play this video of drones over Gaza as loud as you can. <http://youtu.be/REa19YjAlg> FILL your body with the sound. Draw a target on your left hand. When the explosions in this video occur SCREAM into the target of your hand and then write WRITE AS FAST AS YOU CAN!! Set a piece of fruit near a speaker, cover them with pillows and blankets to lock the sound in and play the recording as loud as you can, filling the fruit with the sound of the flying killer robots the Pentagon wants us to call Drones. Then eat the fruit as quickly as you can, chewing, swallowing the SOUND of the drones set into the molecules of water in the fruit, then write WRITE AS FAST AS YOU CAN!! Listen to the recording with headphones in a dark room, listen outside looking up at the sky, listen on the toilet, hiding in a closet, under the bed. When you hear the sound of the explosions scream into the target of your hand, then reach your left hand over the top of your head to grab the right ear then PULL YANK THE EAR AND HEAD TO THE SIDE AND FORCE IT TO BE STILL WHILE WRITING WRITING AS FAST AS YOU CAN!!

PART TWO:

we are made up of trillions of cells. every cell in our body vibrates, taking in what it needs and letting go of what it doesn't need. this vibration happens on a very deep level within us. we are always moving, even in stillness, we are always active. the cells draw oxygen to themselves from the blood, which themselves are engaged in taking in what they need and letting go what they don't. this process is constant, neverending. it is the basis, the ground level of our sense of being alive. when we tap into it it is the most basic sense we can have of being connected with ourselves and with everything around us. this micro level of cellular breathing is reflected on a macro level in our regular breathing, our ability to bridge the inside and outside of our bodies. this is called an "oceanic" state. it's what happens when we are forming in the womb. but even though the general sense of this state is one of connectedness, there are still boundaries, crossings across membranes. there are still feelings of participation and isolation.

fill a large pot to the brim with lukewarm water. take off all of your clothes. lie down somewhere where you have some space around you. place the pot on your stomach and breathe. the water will spill a little bit over the sides of the pot. try to balance it there as you breathe but interest yourself in the spilling water. at some point enough water may spill out that you're only just balancing the pot. feel how you push into the weight of the pot as you breathe. you push into the space beyond

yourself. you push into the weight of the space and it pushes back, but in an imbalanced way. maybe the whole thing doesn't work and you try over and over to make it work, aware of your breathing the whole time as you move and re-arrange yourself. feel your skin against the ground, feel the water against your skin and notice the temperature change from warm to cold. if you want, every now and then dry yourself off, re-fill the pot and try it again. be gentle about it, you're not in a rush. when you've tried to balance the pot for the amount of time that interests you, take the pot and slowly pour it over yourself and lie there for a little longer, letting the water and yourself get cold. take notes throughout. maybe the water gets on the notes and smears them. it's ok. take more notes.

WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING BUT THERE IS NO HUNGER SUPPRESSANT FOR THE MONEY GODS

By CAConrad

don't be ungrateful
we have come to bomb your city
there is no stopping us forget it
aren't you against this place
making new plans for old smells
swapping out focus for a kiss
average sensations have
much more capital
robotic arm will make you stronger
making us function better is a risky idea
bombs set to the wording of placement
little forecast of the wayward angels
it's not okay unless you're a Nazi
efficiency breeding brutality
never sure if the love we wish
is the love we even know about anymore
red stain making it's way under
his shirt catches my attention
attracting at the last moment
one more kiss just one
Thor rune tattooed
above my ass crack
the committee agrees it's
okay to leave the
rapist off your cv

Dear CA

By Miguel Gutierrez

I didn't write the poem

I couldn't write the poem.

I tried I promise you that I did but I couldn't write it.

I haven't been able to write a poem in months. This is the thing that I couldn't tell you when we spoke or when we wrote back and forth to each other. I don't know why I haven't been able to write it or why I haven't been able to write any poems. I think it was the writing residency that we went on last year. Since then I have only written three poems or maybe four. Some of them good ones but not very good maybe. I don't know that I am a poet after all. I thought maybe that I was but then that writing residency did a great job of destroying any desire for writing that I might have had. It made me feel like a sham, a hack and maybe that is what I am - a hack. Hack! I sent my poems to this one writer for her feedback and she said she could hear the music of them but didn't feel an emotional connection and anyway she was too busy to meet to talk about them. Then I sent them to the poetry foundation to get into a workshop with Marie Howe but I didn't get in. Turns out she didn't even read them because she is so busy that she had student readers read them. So I guess some twenty something year old read my poems and was like, um, no. It's ok because I couldn't really afford the workshop I can't really afford anything right now. I'm broke than I've been in years. I've spent all of my money on furniture. I've lived in my apartment for a year and half and I suddenly realized in the middle of last month that I was going to die and so I better get my apartment together. Do you get those attacks also? I mean, I know I'm going to die all of the time, we all are, and as far as I know I don't have reason to believe that I will die anytime soon. I'm stuck with this powerful heart that just keeps on ticking and a relatively capable body all things considered. Which is why it's so embarrassing that I've been shrouded by a malaise so complete all fall. I had days after days of staying up too late and waking up tired. I had insomnia and I don't ever get insomnia. I woke up worried and anxious about all of the things I was supposed to do - including writing this poem - that I was somehow incapable of getting myself to do. I know of course that this is a cop out and perhaps you will be disappointed and Marissa will be disappointed and perhaps some of the people here will be too. We're supposed to be hearing a fucking poem goddammit. I'm on the bus writing this and there's a man a few seats ahead of me who keeps wanting to engage me in conversation. Oh you missed the 1045 bus, too? Yes I did. Did they make you pay the five-dollar change fee? Yes they did. Do you know what time we get into Philadelphia? Um, 2 I guess. Oh ok. Sorry, he said, finally catching on that I was a surly procrastinating poet. I am writing this with my eyes closed so that he really gets the message that I'm in a trance. A trance of avoidance. Earlier I was on the subway and two women sitting across from me on were cramming for a final. One of them was writing herself crib notes and stuffing them into her bra. I was impressed. Then I looked next to me and the woman was reading a book called "Brooklyn." I tried to catch some of the

dialogue. I think it said “he was really good” or something like that but she caught on to my spying and turned the page. I forgot to mention that the cheating woman was wearing black fishnets, black knee-high pleather boots and a black and white polka dot miniskirt. I looked at her long and hard trying to figure out how to describe the boots and this other woman who was getting off of the train saw me and gave me a look that said I see you staring at that woman you perv. I am a perv but not for women. Previously I had been staring at the bulge in a guy’s jeans as he stood next to me. I’m more of an ass man but lately I look at the bulge as well. I’ve even googled sports bulge. There are so many videos to look at.

I did do the somatic you sent me. It was unbearable and frightening and even as I think about it now I start to tear up and hollow out. People here pay lip service to the idea that we are being surveilled constantly I mean it’s true I guess but a security camera on the street corner or in your apartment building lobby is no match for a hovering drone that drops bombs in your neighborhood. I felt ashamed, small. The pain and confusion of living with this was, is, unfathomable to me. I listened to an interview the other night with Richard Dreyfuss of all people and the interviewer commented on his great activist work and said why did you become an activist and Richard scoffed and said I think the question is why are you not an activist. Just like a lefty to turn the tables like that. I don’t know if I’m an activist any more. I’m not a poet and I’m not an activist. I’m a person who desperately tries to reorganize his apartment so that if he dies he feels like there will at least be this Ikea showroom of a living space to show that he figured out where to store things. I try to work or to rehearse or to live in my imagination but there are so many emails to get to CA so many emails. Everything in my profession collaborates to make me a bad artist. All of the administrative work all of the having to get back to people on time all of the irritating texts that peck at you like mosquitoes and the “constant terrible connectedness” as Paul Virilio writes, it all conspires to strip more and more time away until I become a shell rather than a filled out force. I have a lot of sympathy for mediocre middle-aged artists now.

Did you know that 46 percent of people in New York live in or are close to living in poverty and that 1 in 6 children in this country go hungry every day? I learned that on the radio yesterday. I don’t know how or if this relates to Gaza but I know that people there have their food and water controlled, right? Rations are par for the course. And all of this while there is more than enough food to feed everyone in the world several times over it’s a problem of distribution and of people giving a fuck, and there, well it’s a way of reminding them who is really in charge. Do you know that last year after Hurricane Sandy when it became impossible to get gas in New York people were sucking and siphoning gas out of parked cars? We’re just a few hurricanes away from total societal collapse. At least it felt abnormal. But what does a person in Gaza feel about hearing the drones all of the time? And why doesn’t anything happen about the fact that the use of drones has what, doubled? Tripled? during the Obama administration? He made a speech at Nelson Mandela’s memorial yesterday saying that he aspires to be like Mandela. Well he’s not trying very hard. In my insomnia and anxiety attacks this fall I’ve gotten obsessed with that tv show called Scandal which is about politicians and everyone just fucking everyone else over constantly. It’s thrilling and proposes this profoundly cynical view on

democracy but I don't think it's so far off. Nobody really cares very much anymore, don't you think? I mean, of course there are people who care a lot but I mean the people "above" those people don't care and so very little changes unless you really make a big stink. America shits on the grave of complicated political discourse then continues to just sit there numb, intoxicated with paralysis, and doomed to inaction because of the manipulation of information, debt, tv shows like the one I can't stop watching. It's really a handy way of keeping people in line. It's unfathomable to me what it must be like to have bombs blowing up merely yards away from your home. Last month I saw a dance that my Israeli friend Arkadi is working on where he plays videos that were shot by Palestinians showing all of the ways in which the Israeli settlers harass them. One of the videos showed several young children, mostly boys, five or six years old, shining mirrors into the Palestinians' homes to irritate them. They just sit there and do this. Imagine being driven crazy by light, by the piercing dagger of the sun's unexpected jab into your day all day long. Imagine being that little kid with the mirror, enacting a quiet operation rooted in hate that was taught to you by your parents and by their parents before them? Imagine being Rachel Corrie standing in front of an Israeli armored bulldozer in Gaza to get it to stop and then the progressive crunch of your bones and flattening of your muscles and smearing of your organs and the explosions of your heart, your screams and your brain as the dozer rolls over you. Now imagine being the driver of that bulldozer, young, gay maybe? Lots of men in the Israeli army are gay. Later in the same year he might walk the trails of Independence Park in Tel Aviv cruising for sex and sucking a dick behind a tree or in a cliffside cave while the ocean crashes romantically below. Imagine sitting in Colorado in a well lit room on a swivel chair and a certain keyboard stroke drops bombs on Afghans tens of thousands of miles away and then you get up because it's time for your lunch break and hopefully they'll have the turkey sandwich today. I am a naïve idiot because I don't understand this. I'm just trying to fit all of my books on a shelving unit. CA, I didn't write the poem. I'm a Catholic, and we're better at confession than invention. I really wanted to write it, mostly because I wanted to hold up my side of the bargain. But I've really failed here and this is the best I can offer. Most suicide notes are total literary failures have you noticed?

xo

Miguel