



A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon: New (Soma)tics

C.A. Conrad

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What is the best Love you've ever had in this world? Be quiet while thinking about that Love. If someone comes along and starts talking, quietly shoo them away, you're busy, you're a poet with a penny in your mouth. . . . Now get your pen and paper and write about POVERTY, write line after line about starvation and deprivation from the voice of one who has been Loved in this world.

C.A. Conrad's (Soma)tastic exercises desire to literally crack open existence as we know it. *A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon* is an essential how-to book for anyone interested in breaking through their perceived limitations to become a more politically and physically engaged writer. Incorporating unorthodox steps in the writing process, these twenty-seven exercises and their corresponding poems confirm Conrad's unwavering belief in poetry as a necessary practice for being.

C.A. Conrad, a 2011 PEW Fellow in the Arts, is the author of five books of poetry, including *The Book of Frank* (Wave Books, 2010/Chax Press, 2009). He lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon: New (Soma)tics Details

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From Reader Review A Beautiful Marsupial Afternoon: New (Soma)tics for online ebook

hannah radeke says

"My religion is Poetry, not a religion of kindness and love but one of absolute permission. If Poetry doesn't strip me naked in front of my enemies then nothing will."

Rebecca says

not sure what I just read but I dig it

Joe says

As a natural contrarian to general consensus, I should probably slam this book. But fuck no. It's a thunderclap that lives up to the exceptional treatment WAVE has given it and which announces CA as someone we need to listen to in ways that his previous two books just couldn't.

Reading and evaluating this book just by the lineated poems is an insanity as the book puts forward so many times in the poems themselves, the exercise descriptions and larger, generous syntax of the book itself the idea that the poetic act is complex aesthetic-social-political gesture that occurs on AND off the page, between sensory experience and cognition, between the individual and the community. It's not a book of poetry, it's not a bunch of creative writing exercises, it's not a manifesto, it's alive between these things.

It's interesting to see people respond to this, like all books ahead/out of their times, by wondering if it is a joke.

A Templeton says

I was drawn to CA Conrad after watching them speak on YouTube and into this cantankerous activist mom persona that's going on. This book gave me a chance to engage with it properly and was a bit too much of an immersion. I mean that in more ways than in being reluctant to rub a banana all over my body in order to make a poem. Another friend of mine said they had to stop reading because CA's voice started echoing in their head after a while screaming MOTHER FED YOU or whatever it might be.

At first I was into the upfront politics, and I found the candidness of anger and despair refreshing. But after getting into this book I started feeling like (queer politics pitfall alert) it was becoming more about form than about content. Lamentations about seas of tombstones start to feel like imagic devices more than protestations after a little while, because CA treats the good things in life with the same ALL-CAPS incommensurability. There's also this neocolonial vibe in all the discussions of crystals and chakras and banana-smearing, tropical rainforest envisaging. It seems unchecked.

It seems to me that through these post-Dada (is that wank to make that connection?) exercises - (soma)tics,

as they are called - CA's aim is to cast a poetic landscape that is both internal and external, and the biggest way of doing that is by breaking down numbings or conventions or habits or structures that come between them and the experience of that poetic landscape. But I'm like, if that's the goal, where is the criticality of settler colonialism using like these 'Aztec Tryptophan', eating dark choc while youre doing it?

Of course, some of the poems are really astounding. I'm thinking of the Yellow one from the food colour series (I remember 'our heavy metal roots are never resting plough blades'). But a lot of the poetry washed into itself for me. The (soma)tics are the main star, and even they plateau quite early: notes become notes become notes. I would expect more diverse ways of producing words for the length of this book, and the diversity of physical exercises it suggests. There are so many ways of writing a poem and like taking notes then shaping them is just one? Sometimes I do it in a breath that comes after unthought-of (soma)tics which just arise from my day. I would have appreciated more philosophy in this book. lol.

Now I'M a cantankerous mum, but ultimately this work became tonally jarring for me. I also hate ecosexualism HAH

Patty says

"DO NOT HESITATE to write the most brutal things that come to mind, HESITATE at nothing for that matter."

"I'm tired of poetry not saving the world"

Me too. I love this book.

Mary K says

Bless the book designer for publishing this with vanilla bean covers and big, porous tracts of pages: this book is built to collect stains. For a compilation of somatic challenges meant excise concerns of respectability from a writing practice--how we engage "the muscle that bends language" (yes!)--it only seems right for the body of this text to show scars and fluids, too. I have to shout while reading CA Conrad or else I'm wasting my time. When I read CA Conrad, I feel a little less afraid of the caps lock, of any demonstration of emphasis.

This book is a good one to have sex on top of. It's a good reminder to be brave. It's a good reminder of how much body we're lucky to forget and return to.

Brian says

i have finished reading this book but i don't want to take it off my currently-reading shelf. it's one of those books that when you finish, it's still not finished with you. more than any other book i've read, it is about *process*. it contains photocopies of CA Conrad's notes, the germs of exercises he poses for finding new ways

into poetry. the base matter has always been there, but Conrad draws new maps to access them. he shows us what the poetry landscape looked like when he was there but that doesn't mean it will look the same for you. and he does expect you to take part. it's interactive. there is a need for poetry in an aching and cruel world full of war and pain. he wants everyone to join him and he teaches us how to make our own way into poetry, not pedagogically, but by example. if you are lucky enough to begin this book, you will never finish it. it is ongoing and will live inside of you like something refreshing and inspiring, constantly renewing hope that war and pain are only one aspect to a life full of wonder and discovery.

rebecca says

loving you always CA.

Em says

the best book .

S says

the book's composed of three parts: (1.)the (soma)tastic exercises that Conrad uses to generate the (2.) poetry and (3.) errata that's scattered throughout (interviews, reproductions of notebook pages, etc.).

the poetry is imho not terribly interesting and, by itself, does little to vouch for the exercises, which are much livelier, not that I would, personally, sit in my apartment naked and stare at a weeks' worth of trash for hours to write a poem. given the powerful autobiographical material (the murder of Conrad's boyfriend), predictably the text that leaned in an autobiographical direction made much more of an impression, whereas the non- did not

Jay says

Write and read with our bodies

Griffin Alexander says

*I went to the very
Real bank with
A gun for the
Fiction of
Money
A beautiful poem should
Help you rob a bank
that's its job*

CAConrad must truly be experienced to be believed.

Kymm Lg says

I am awake and dreaming, once again.

Today, I was able to look in the mirror and said, "Hey! There you are."

CA Conrad is a magician, making ugliness beautiful, and the mundane, insane.

Matthew says

"Alice Notley was/not married to/Ted Hughes stop/talking like/that around me"

"what I really want/is to scatter/my own/ashes"

We can become poetry and CAConrad offers procedures to wear poems as skin. Much of the book expands beyond the poems into descriptions of exercises that generated the poems, such as cooking and eating a Jim Brody poem or rubbing dirt from outside Emily Dickinson's house all over your body. The poems, socially activated and wisely enraged, constantly find joy in language and friends as engagements in and around a life immersed in acts of creating poetry. His send ups to Jim Brody, Frank O'Hara, and a boyfriend who died of AIDs are especially fantastic.

J.A. says

This book is like seeing inside of Conrad's poetry, the guts, the inner workings, the immense luxury of being told where a poem began, how exactly its seed was birthed into lines, and then fast-forwarding to the fully realized version, the poem proper. If poetics had a womb with a translucent facade, and we could look in uninhibited, it would be this book.
