



Poetry writing and discussion workshop tasks

Workshop: rooms and places

Part 1:

1. First set a timer for two minutes and just write freely about any topic at all, example prompts below:
 - Describe something near you
 - Write about what you've done today
 - Write about where you are – what chair are you sitting in? How does your body feel? What room are you in? what normally happens in that room?
 - Write about your favourite food
2. Read the following poem that includes the line “I’m not fertile” as one of many aspects of the person, can you write a version of this poem about yourself?

Ars Poetica

Carmen Giménez

I'm ill I'm federal I'm on leave I'm a child of refuge I'm holy I'm a shit
I'm desperate I won't tell you anything I'm first-gen I'm Gen X I'm tied up
I'm bipolar I'm not fertile I'm a secret I'm the now
I'm indifferent I'm a disgrace I'm funny I'm assistance I'm not saved
I was Mormon I'm atheist I'm mysterious I'm scared I'm head of household
I'm quick-tempered I'm day job I'm night-ghost I'm failure I act white
I live bankrolled I'm deliverable I'm not gang I'm crazy ex I'm
slippery I'm post-post-post I'm greedy I'm double-crossing I'm delusional
I'm above average BMI I'm hairy I'm indebted I'm weak I'm non-confrontational
I'm in therapy I'm sorry I am empowered I don't have a tattoo I don't have money
I have too many ex-friend I am agoraphobic I am recorder
I have a valid passport I've never been arrested I should have been arrested
I know too much I can barely read at times I can barely rise at times
I'm gay I'm marginally fit I'm arthritic I'm flaky
I have few skills I'm salty I'm a time bomb
I'm baptized I'm dry I'm chronic pain I'm big at mom's house
I can't remember how many I'm obstructionist I'm a Master
That was my confessional Thank you very much

3. Thinking about space. Write down everything you can remember from the physical space of the clinic or doctor's office – colour of the seats, were there plants? Was there a painting on the wall? Who was with you?
4. From the items you wrote down, write down any words or thoughts next to them that they inspire. For example:
Huge painting of a beach
 - a. reminds me a of a sea swim I did before egg retrieval, excited
 - b. Makes me think of kids playing on a beach
 - c. sea overwhelming and relentless
5. Read the following poem. What do you notice about the words it uses, or the shape of it?

Inventory for a Treatment Room

Julia Copus

Her two bare feet, six blue, translucent
overshoes that crackle
across the floodlit floor
with people

in them, one of whom's her lover;
laughter, many hushed,
expectant silences;
a stool,

white plastic, where a nurse will sit, coo-
cooing like a mother
hen, a speculum;
no windows,

no sea-breeze, but an air that hatches
occasional, tentative jokes;
a lamp on a long, extend-
able limb;

one purple treatment chair, whose empty
purple arms reach out
for her.

6. Can you shape your descriptions of the room and the feelings/ experiences they invoked into some lines of poetry using Julia Copus's poem for inspiration?
7. A line break creates emphasis, it draws the eye or interrupts the flow. Look at what you have written, think about where you have put the line breaks – would you like to change any of them?
8. Think about what you have written, does it get across what you want it to? Have you captured what you wanted? Read the poem out loud to yourself. Are there things you want to change or add?

Part two

1. Read the poem below. It describes the strange feeling of being somewhere else and going about your life as your embryos are being created in a lab. Write down which words stand out to you and think about why – did they remind you of something?

At the Farmer's Inn

Julia Copus

Her lover lifts a Pilsner to his lips,
swallows it back
till the order arrives and they move like marionettes,
eat without talking.
Devilled kidneys, sea bass, crème brûlée.

The waitresses angle their hips between tables and carry
Plates in the air,
Straight-limbed as matadors. Meanwhile, the men at the bar,
afloat on their barstools,
are baying like seals; a forest of backs occludes

both the girl and her tongue-tied lover. Out of the window,
behind his head,
night falls between the slats of the trestle tables,
over the scutch-grass
and the sheep, bunched in the corner of a field.

The hubbub thickens the air like moth-wings, it beats
at the sides of her skull.
Meal over, the day's a done deal – the dawn and the dusk,
the seed, the eggs
they harvested at noon with the consummate needle,

drawing them off like tiny, luminous pearls
from the sea of her body.
Now they drink the dregs of their coffee, call for the bill,
link hands above
the petit fours while fifty miles from here

along the unfurled ribbon of the street,
the lamplit miles
of motorway, in a clinic, a darkened room,
like mushrooms, *very*
whitely, discreetly, the longed-for lives begin.

2. Can you think of a place you went after egg retrieval or as your embryos were being made? Can you jot down some lines describing it?
3. Have you used any metaphors or similes, where you compare one thing to another (black as coal) – for example in Julia Copus's poem 'The hubbub thickens the air like moth-wings,' Would you like to add any of these in?