



Event Title

Divine Writing: Connections between Writing Practice, Craft and Divination

Event Description: What are divination poetics and how do they manifest in writing practice? Can divination tools such as the Tarot, I Ching, and Throwing the Bones influence modes of creation and assemblage? Does the written word have the same generative agency as a reading? When we read the spread or the signs are we also writing the story? Four writers and divination practitioners share the ways in which divination, intuition, and embodied knowledge influence, guide, and disrupt their writing.

Event Category: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Event Organizer and Moderator

Michele Battiste is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *Waiting for the Wreck to Burn*, which won the Louise Bogan Award from Trio House Press. She has taught workshops for Gotham Writers Workshops, Teen Ink and Wichita State University. She currently raises funds to protect nature.

Event Participants

Teresa Carmody's writing includes fiction, creative nonfiction, inter-arts collaborations, and hybrid forms. She is the author of three books and four chapbooks, most recently *The Reconception of Marie*. Carmody is co-founding editor of Les Figues Press and director of Stetson University's MFA of the Americas.

Megan Kaminski is a poet and essayist—and the author of three books of poetry, most recently *Gentlewomen*, and *Prairie Divination*, an illustrated collection of essays + oracle deck (with artist L. Ann Wheeler). She is an Associate Professor in English at the University of Kansas.

Kristen E. Nelson is the author of the poetry collection *the length of this gap* and two chapbooks: *sometimes I get lost and is grateful for noises in the dark* and *Write, Dad*. She is a PhD student and teaches creative writing at UC Santa Cruz. Kristen has been studying divination for 29 years and is the co-founder of FourQueens.org.

Selah Saterstrom works in a Southern family-style of card reading and has given professional and community readings for over 30 years. She has written five books, including *Ideal Suggestions: Essays in Divinatory Poetics* and *Rancher*. With Kristen E. Nelson, she runs Four Queens, offering creative writing and divination classes. She teaches theory and creative writing at the University of Denver.

Opening Remarks and Housekeeping Announcements

Good afternoon and welcome to "Divine Writing: Connections between Writing Practice, Craft and Divination." A few reminders before we begin:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let me know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.

- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone's use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.
- A quick note to say that unfortunately both Hoa Nguyen and Hillary Leftwich are unable to join us today for personal reasons that, fortunately, are not the result of misfortune. So all is well with them, though we will miss them. We are super lucky, however, to have convinced Teresa Carmody and Kristen Nelson to join Selah and Megan in conversation about divination and its connections to our writing and to our identities as writers. I am so looking forward to this panel discussion.

Michele Intro

My name is Michele Battiste, and I bought my first Tarot deck—the Rider Waite—at a Waldenbooks in my local mall when I was 17 years old. I dutifully practiced, worked the Celtic Cross spread, and gave readings to my high school friends in the cafeteria at lunch time. And I was terrible at it. I couldn't remember what the cards signified, lost the threads and the connections, and confused my positions on the cross. But I knew there was a story in the cards. Limitless stories. Stories to be told and stories to listen to. And I knew that I just needed to find a different way in.

A few years later, I was browsing in another bookstore—I think it was another Waldenbooks—I came across the *Mythic Tarot* by Juliet Sharman-Burke and Liz Greene. They transformed the narrative threads of the suits into the epic Greek myths. The suit of Wands, for example, became the story of Jason and the Argonauts in their quest for the golden fleece. The Fool's journey of the Major Arcana passed through all the gods. And I realized that the Tarot isn't this contained system of signification. It is a portal to the stories that shape us. That in the intersection of remembering, connecting, and telling of the narrative threads, there is this generative re-weaving that changes the right here, right now. And the web reach into our futures. That is my connection to divination as a writer.

I am so excited to hear from this panel and their connections, and to make the discussion as dynamic as possible, each panelist will present for about 3-5 minutes, and then we will shift to a 5-10 minute discussion on the topic the panelist introduced. We'll do that for each of the panelists, and we should have time for a few audience questions at the end.

I'll briefly introduce all the panelists now and then Selah will start us off. (Michele reads bios)

Panelists Initial Remarks

Selah Saterstrom

I will talk about the animating principles of divination, as I experience them, and how these principles connect to writing. In my talk, I'll be thinking about how both divination and writing invite us to have a relationship with uncertainty that is rooted in liberation. I'll be thinking through Divinatory Poetics—those places where writing and oracular technologies conjunct. I'll be invoking a deck of cards as a living anthology that constantly resequences itself. I'll also be approaching the tarot card as an archive

and consider ways we might organize the flux or otherwise abide with radical simultaneity and emergent potentiality.

Moderator Question for the Panel

What do writing and divination have in common? How do they connect? Do they converge?

Megan Kaminski

I will talk about divination as a practice of deep listening and opening oneself to wonder and awe. I'll also situate this more broadly within poetic practices of care and interspecies collaboration through sharing about *Prairie Divination* and my current poetry project. I'm especially interested in the ways in which divination, poetry, and somatic work can help us to connect to often unseen and unheard wisdom all around and already in us, and the ways that the recognizing and listening to those knowledges can help us imagine and build liberatory futures.

Moderator Question for the Panel

How does divination connect us to others? How can it broaden possibilities for writing (and seeing) the world differently?

Teresa Carmody

I will talk about divinatory poetics as part of an aesthetic tradition of procedural and chance-based poetics. In other words, if I, or you, were to teach a course on divinatory poetics, what might that syllabus look like? Mine might include (in addition to present company) Hilma af Klint's abstractions, John Cage's chance-based compositions, and CA Conrad's eco-somatics. In this way, I will call toward other artists and writers who may sit with us: on the shelf and in the syllabus.

Moderator Question for the Panel

How is your practice (writing, divinatory) in conversation with your artistic and spiritual antecedents or ancestors? Who do you call on? Who is stepping forward to speak?

Kristen E. Nelson

I will be discussing "The Crossroads" as a physical and metaphorical place of shimmering possibility. In our practices of divinatory poetics, we access conjunctions of writing and divination, of memory and craft, of animality and divinity, to generate creative work. I'm specifically interested in the relationship of how the potential confluences at the crossroads, can help us to write in and with a collective utterance.

Moderator Question for the Panel

What are the possibilities of writing from these confluences with our tools of divination?