

COMPOSING A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

THE WRITING CONFERENCE HOSTED MANY WORKSHOPS, FROM MEDITATION TO DIVE BARS

BY MATT ROWNING

My eyes rapidly twitched. A drip of drool perched on the end of my lip. Faint impressions of light took shape on the inside of my eyelids as my body wisped away into nothingness, twisting out into light and dust.

This new designer drug I was tasting was called meditation, and the drug den was upstairs in Roger Rook. Part of the Compose Writing Conference hosted here at Clackamas Community College on Saturday, May 14, the meditation workshop's objective was to teach meditation to clear one's mind.

My mind got a whole lot more than cleared.

Robin Veda, an actress and yoga teacher, led the exercise. She was joined by Trista Cornelius, an artist and former CCC writing teacher. The premise of the class was to put us in touch with our creativity: to clear away the anxieties and preconceptions of what our writing should be and to let the ideas flow.

Cornelius had us write a creative challenge we were facing. It could be either broad or a specific project. Mine was pertaining to the portfolio project I'm working on, a five-song EP called Tormentor. I had two songs to go, and the lyrics were proving hard to conjure up.

I wrote "Tormentor" at the top of my page as my creative challenge. Veda then told us to close our eyes and the meditation began.

I'd never done this before and I didn't want to seem like a dirty hippy. Still, I have a talent for diving in head first. I listened to Veda's directions and felt the disconnect take hold, or more properly, I slipped away.

Light is filling you up, she said. Feel it in your toes, your legs, your thighs. As the "light" filled us, I started to have strange, euphoric sensations.

When called back to this astral plane, I stared at the ground like a junky deep in his fix. Cornelius asked us to write about our challenge.

Here're the words that staggered out of my consciousness after the meditation:

*"Spotlight Vessel,
Catch the Beam.*

*This is my moment,
A waking dream.*

*Body glows sunlight,
Burning bright mead,
Standing front center,
in the angel's beam.*

*Center Vessel pours over,
Energy fills a thousand cups,
Drink freely of light that overflows,
There is a thousand times enough.*

*Raise the center, first electric
There is no heartache or sickness
It's burned up in the spotlight's beam,
And we all bear witness to a holy dream."*

I know it's ridiculous to the denizens of this dimension, but this is the euphoria I felt after Veda's meditation.

I left the class feeling well-rested and clear headed. I attended one other class at the Compose conference, led by Matt Love, a teacher and prolific writer from Astoria. It didn't put drool on my lip, but it inspired me to seek out droolers of a different kind.

Love's workshop was entitled "Dive Bars: Great Stories." Dive bars are a unique culture. The people in them hold many awesome stories. Love's comic genius and many years of searching dive bars for stories made for an electrifying class.

"You are in a dive bar writing workshop in a community college, which I usually teach in a dive bar," began Love

photo by Tom Boggess

to the laughs of the room.

He had the class write down a Jim Harrison quote: "How can you experience the rich fabric of life in a locale without visiting the bars? The answer is, you can't."

This was Love's mantra in his brand of meditation.

We responded to the quote.

Mine: "When I was in the Heritage Pub two days ago, the roar of three men watching Steph Curry play was more culture than any other pub I've ever been to.

Curry was sinking threes: three-finger prostate exams, and the men were howling in pain."

The workshop was equal parts reminiscing on old taverns and creative writing advice. Love handed out a list of questions he'd actually been asked in dive bars over the years. Some of the charmers were:

• "Do you know how much cocaine Jack Nicholson snorted in here?" asked in Depoe Bay, a film site of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

• "You know a man had his ashes flushed down the toilet in here?" Apparently, 15 men flushed one of their long-time friends down the urinal as per his wishes.

• And the obligatory "Do I have a purty mouth?" from "Deliverance."

The class was challenged to use one of the questions as a prompt. After a 10-minute writing powwow we reconvened and shared our responses to some of the ridiculous questions. Laughs ensued, almost like a lively dive bar at 8:30 p.m. when everyone is still only one or two beers deep.

Compose was fantastic. I only got to go to two of three workshops, but I had an amazing time at the conference.

Please, for the love of mind-orgasms and dive bars, attend this awesome workshop next year.

**"Do you know
how much
cocaine Jack
Nicholson snorted
in here?"**

At left, attendees of the Compose Writing Conference on May 14 try out meditating as a means of freeing their creativity.

