

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

*Word Woman*

## Playshops with Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

*This is a sample of popular workshops Rosemerry has led in the last year. Custom workshops are also available.*

### **The Weight of the Unknown: Writing from the unconstricted throat**

We live in a culture that wants to know—we chart, graph, test, outline, classify, name and judge. But what of all the messiness, mystery and unruly potential that breeds beneath our longing for certainty? What would happen when we engage, as Adrienne Rich writes, with “the weight of the unknown, the untracked, the unrealized?” In this workshop we’ll explore how we might draw strength from “the great muscle of metaphor,” launching our poems and ourselves into the vast realm of possibility. We’ll read poems that lead us deeper into paradox and write our own explorations of what if and what else. Let’s see what even a small bit of wonder might do ...

### **Why Look Like a Dead Fish? A Day of Reading and Writing with Rumi**

*“With passion pray. With passion make love. With passion eat and drink and dance and play. Why look like a dead fish in this ocean of God?”*

*Jalaladin Rumi (1207-1273)*

And with passion, we’ll read and converse and write. Rumi, a Sufi poet, theologian and teacher born in Persia, has been the best selling poet in America since the 1980s. His is a universal voice for cosmic, Divine love, not limited by religious beliefs, not embroiled in dogma. Into our modern, synthetic, technological world starved for real ecstasy, Rumi spills ecstasy. We’ll talk about Rumi’s life, read his poems from multiple translators, and write our own poems in response to his words. All are welcome, regardless of poetic experience. As Rumi would say, “It’s rigged—everything in your favor. So there is nothing to worry about.”

### **Holy in the Moment: Exploring What Matters All Around Us**

Albert Einstein noted, “The field is the only reality.” Poets, too, have been exploring this concept for centuries—how do we connect the world around us? Our survival depends on the answer— all the more reason to be paying attention! In this workshop we’ll read contemporary American poets including Mary Oliver, Li-Young Lee, Jane Hirschfield, Naomi Shihab-Nye and Louise Glück, and explore how they link the external “field” with what happens inside of us—creating connections between outer landscapes and inner emotional landscapes. We’ll go outside and make our own connections, do our own writing, and share our ideas and words. What kind of impact can this awareness have on our lives? How might we carry this awareness with us as we engage in the world?

### **Lost in Motherland: Writing to Discover Who We Are(n't)**

Motherhood changes things. Amidst the blessings and the challenges, we transform. As one mother put it, "With my first child, I lost my interests. With my second child, I lost my identity." How do we lean into motherhood's paradoxical blend of miracle and loss? Writing can help. As James Pennebroke writes in *Opening Up*, writing "clears the mind" and helps us "understand and reorient our complicated lives" and "helps keep our psychological compass oriented." In this workshop, Rosemerry leads other mothers in a writing practice that also includes moving meditation, mapping, reading and other pathways that help us reorient ourselves and meet the moment as it is. What happens when we ask, "Who am I?" As Ramana Maharshi says, "The purpose of that question is not to find an answer but to dissolve the questioner." What's that supposed to mean? Come play.

### **Walking in Two Worlds at Once: A playshop that leaps between details and dreams**

Chink. Chink. That's the sound of the poem breaking open to show a bit of its heart. How do we do that? In this workshop, we'll explore how poems can sometimes walk in two worlds at once: a world of sense memory—the world of pagers, cell phones, to do lists, robinsong, blizzard and mud; and also a world of emotional memory, a world dedicated to meaning making—the world we inhabit when we dream, imagine and feel. What exactly will we do? Generate a kind of magical language, sometimes sounding like double-speak, language that harbors contradictions, paradoxes, contraries, Zen-like koans that challenge the brain, working along the lines of Keats' notion of "negative capability" in which the mind may hold disparate views without any "irritable reaching after fact and reason." With play and practice, reading, writing and sharing, we'll do a little balancing act of our own, leaping from dreamworld to glittering details and back again. And again.

### **Writing the Path: Our goal is discovery**

What path are you on? For thousands of years, the path has been a popular metaphor for understanding our journey through life. Cavafy advises us to "pray that the road is long." Frost suggests we "take the road less traveled by." A.R. Ammons advocates that we "hoist our burdens, get on down the road." How we choose to walk on our path affects all we are connected to. And are we not connected to everything? Through the practices of writing, reading and paying attention—or as Rumi would say, opening the sail—we divine who we are in the world. This reading and writing workshop will focus on exploring the use of images and how these are used to engage with the landscape, the imagination and the reader. Through our choice of images, we frame the path we're on.