**Trio House Press - Poetry Now**

***Threed, This Road Not Damascus***

*The following are sample lesson plans to generate discussion and learning applicable to the designated text.  Instructors and facilitates should adapt lesson plans and content to meet their class schedules (time limits), course content, and learning outcomes****:***

**Lesson Plan:** “Tell it to me backwards: tracking linearity in Tamara J. Madison’s *Threed, This Road Not Damascus*”

**Lesson objectives:**

* Analyze the nature of linearity in Madison’s poetry.
* Understand and challenge traditional views on character arcs.
* Crafting palindrome poems.

**Target Audience:** College level creative writers

**Key Terms:**

* **Poetic speaker**: the narrative voice or persona of a poem, who is not always the poet themselves.
* **Character arc**: The journey a character takes over the course of a story that typically produces a gradual, inner transformation, growth, or maturity.
* **Palindrome**: a number, word, or sentence that can be read backward or forward with the same effect and meaning. A palindrome poem can be read top to bottom with one meaning, though when reversed, it may be read with a different meaning.

**Tasks:**

1. Read the following three poems*: Found Restitution: Maternal Lineage 1* (p. 10)*, Prophecy: Maternal Lineage 2* (p. 11)*, and Luck of the Irish: Maternal Lineage 3* (p. 13)*.* Then, answer the following:
   1. These three poems are part of the *Maternal Lineage* series and track the poetic speaker’s maternal heritage. First, identify words and phrases that create a sense of lineage, transition, and time that is passing.
   2. Do you think these poems are linear? They are numbered in sequential order, but do you think they work in this order? If so, why? If you think their order could be altered, how could it be altered? What affect would that have on the story of the speaker’s maternal lineage?
2. Read the following two poems*: Wombing: Three-Breasted Woman Shares Her Birth Story* and *Psalms: In Praise of Three-Breasted Woman.* Then, answer the following:
   1. Identify the poetic speaker in each of these poems. How are they similar, by way of tone or language, and how do they differ?
   2. Think of these two poems in comparison to the *Maternal Lineage* poems. What can be said about these two poems’ linearity? Do you think they are sequential, or can their order be reversed? Provide reasoning as to why.
   3. *Wombing* is a creation poem, but in many ways, so is *Psalms*. Why do you think the poet chose to open and close the book on these poems? Do they provide a conventional beginning and end, or do they loop back around to each other? Defend your answer with reasoning and evidence.
3. Now, using all 5 poems that you’ve read so far, think about the concept of a character arc. Traditionally, character arcs are journeys that characters take over the course of a story, or real life, to become fully realized/developed people. They rise and fall, but usually stagnate and conclude. Pick either the poems in the *Maternal Lineage* series, or *Wombing* and *Psalms*, and answer the following:
   1. How can we use these poems to understand the concept of a character arc? Do they support the idea that characters, or people, have clear starting and stopping points and reach a peak point of development? Or do they challenge that idea? Provide reasoning and evidence for your answer.

**Free-Write:**

In *Threed, This Road Not Damascus*, Madison writes many poems that deal with the subject of lineage. Lineage is often thought of as linear, like a family tree that climbs up and up, but many of the connections in Madison’s poems are not as clear as this, and sometimes we cannot tell where one character ends and another beings. With these ideas in mind, for the next 30 minutes, respond to the following:

1. Write a poem that works in sequential order. You may write a poem about family lineage, like Madison does in her *Maternal Lineage* poems, or you may want to write more metaphysically, like Madison does in *Wombing* and *Psalms*. You may want to write a poem on making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Whatever poem you write, it must follow a sequential timeline. **At the same time,** you should also be able to reverse your poem so that it has a completely new meaning. You are essentially writing a palindrome poem that can be read from top to bottom to get at one meaning, but can also be read bottom to top to get at another.

**Materials:**

<https://www.amazon.com/Threed-This-Road-Not-Damascus/dp/1949487032/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=threed&qid=1621975054&sr=8-1>

**Palindrome Poetry Examples:**

<http://thevirtualworld.blogspot.com/2005/03/palindrome-poems.html>