

# INTRODUCTION TO (Soma)tic Poetry Rituals

from the book *ECODEVIANCE: (Soma)tics for the Future Wilderness* (Wave Books, 2014)

Growing up in a rural factory town I watched my creative family extend the grind of their monotonous jobs outside the factory walls and into their lives until they were no longer capable of accessing their artistic abilities. The factory essentially divorced them from their sense of their essential selves. This wouldn't happen to me, I thought, and moved to a large city to foster my skills as an artist and to surround myself with like-minded people. For many years this was feeling right, that I was doing exactly what I came to do, not working in the factory back home. But in 2005 when visiting my family for a reunion I listened again to their stories about the factory, and as always these stories saddened me. On the train ride home I had an epiphany that I had been treating my poetry like a factory, an assembly line, and doing so in many different ways, from how I constructed the poems, to my tabbed and sequenced folders for submissions to magazines, etc. This was a crisis, and I stopped writing for nearly a month, needing to figure out how to climb out of these factory-like structures, or to quit writing altogether. But I wanted to thrive in the crisis rather than end the trajectory of self-discovery the poems had set me on over the years. One morning I made a list of the worst problems with the factory, and at the top of that list was "lack of being present." The more I thought about this the more I realized this was what the factory robbed my family of the most, and the thing that frightened me the most, this not being aware of place in the present. That morning I started what I now call (Soma)tics, ritualized structures where being anything but present was next to impossible. These rituals create what I refer to as an "extreme present" where the many facets of what is around me wherever I am can come together through a sharper lens. It has been inspiring that (Soma)tics reveal the creative viability of everything around me. This book contains twenty-three new (Soma)tic rituals and their resulting poems.

My deepest gratitude to everyone at Wave Books,

CAConrad