



Hello! Thank you so much for tuning in to Beckett's Babies. We are so happy that you joined us! Every episode, we love to attach a playwriting exercise that we think might be helpful so that you can go forth and start writing your own play! Below is a playwriting exercise from our guest and playwright friend Ryan Oliveira.

Chaos Agents and Meditations: Techniques I've Picked Up from Maria Irene Fornés and Her Maestras

It's hard to encapsulate the techniques of maestra playwright Maria Irene Fornés without being guided in a room through her meditations. And I don't claim to be an expert on every method she utilized to encourage her playwrights to explore and dig deep. But the best I can offer is detailing what works for me as a playwright after taking several workshops – some through special coursework led by Anne Garcia-Romero and Lisa Schlesinger, others through the Fornés Workshop led by Migdalia Cruz - where playwrights are challenged to write as a means of battle.

1. **Find a space that allows for proper meditation.** This is crucial. You don't want a lot of noise or distraction. You want a space that feels safe for you to roam with your memories. It may be a bedroom. It may be a desk. A library, even. But give yourself a proper space for meditation.
2. **Stretch and be ready for battle.** Writing isn't just a mental task; it's an act that engages your entire body, from the movement of your hand on a page up and down to the shifting of your body with the memory-punches. Treat your body right. Do some neck rolls, front-bends, arm-circles – circling one arm in one direction and the other in the opposite direction is a must, to prepare your brain for tracking conflicting data – and air-punches. Give yourself at least five minutes for this section.

3. **Write on paper.** Writing is an extension of energy and it should not be an act that requires instant editing. Computers make it very easy to edit without much energy involved – it makes writing convenient. On paper, your words have weight, as do your strike-outs. On paper, you're able to write in more ways than left-to-right – you can write with arrows, with columns, with pockets of text in spots you never expected. With paper, you are allowed to roam as your mind does, minus programming.
4. **Meditate on a memory.** Recall a specific moment in time. Examples include: A moment where someone you loved very much didn't love you back. A moment that broke your childhood forever. A moment where you finally snapped back at someone. A moment where you arrived at true happiness. Recall the pieces of that memory: When? Where? Who was there? Recall all the sensory details, and don't hold back on exploring – What was the temperature? What did it smell like? What did someone sound like? Feel like, if they touched you? Don't be afraid to dig deep (and safely) with every detail until that moment becomes tangible. And whatever you do, don't write it down. Journey with it in your mind.
5. **Now, alter the memory.** Introduce a character in that meditation, or focus on another character in it. Perhaps there's an animal – what it looks like, how it moves. Focus on that animal until it transforms into another human before you. Or perhaps, the characters you have travel to another space – from a beach to a boiler room, or a bedroom to a garden. How do they change as you guide them through your memory? Or an action suddenly befalls the person. Maybe they die in front of you. Or they suddenly sprout wings. What changes in the relationship? Again, don't write it down. Journey with these changes in your mind...

To get the full playwriting exercise, go to Ryan's website below to learn more:
<https://www.ryanoliveira.com/single-post/2019/02/08/Chaos-Agents-and-Meditations-Techniques-Ive-Picked-Up-from-Maria-Irene-Forn%C3%A9s-and-Her-Maestras>

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contact@beckettsbabies.com