



[INTRO AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

Lessons, Lessons, Lessons

—for *Salem Lessons*, 2010 (rare book, offset print on Johannot paper, silkscreen print images, accordion fold binding, handmade endpapers, vintage writing slate covers) poetry by Nicole Cooley, book art by Maureen Cummins. Exhibited in “The Secret Lives of Girls and Women” at the Special Collections Library at Penn State, Jan 29 – Sep 1, 2019 (curated by Clara Drummond and Julie M. Porterfield) and is available to consult. Images appear with the permission of the artist and poet.

The upright, accordion fold display of the 2010 rare book *Salem Lessons* and its slate covers drew me in during the 2019 exhibit “The Secret Lives of Girls & Women” featured in the Special Collections Library at Penn State University.

Artist Maureen Cummins and poet Nicole Cooley researched and ruminated on a penmanship book kept by a West Salem boy in the early 1800s and its relationship to the Salem Witch trials of the 1690s, long before. This time-looping, collaborative approach dared me to contribute another poem in response. The idea of art inspiring art spoke to the circular form and repetitive teachings represented in this work – and its conversation with present day had me envisioning stones as the quiet, chilling choices individuals make to perpetuate misogyny.

My experience turning pages of this uniquely bound book inspired flame and wave imagery in the poem; and I had fun blending the meanings of board and slate throughout. In the end, I did find a lesson of hope in the symbolic circle – a call to action in its invitation to gather around. And listen.