



Recorded Events


Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series, # 397

00:00:01 Peggy

Welcome, everyone, to reading 397 of the It's About Time Writers' Reading Series. This, as you are well aware, will be the last reading of 2022. The anniversary of the founding was January 1990, so that always makes December exciting as well as January. It's thrilling to see so many familiar faces, especially because it seems like- to close the year- it's like a reunion for all of us. So tonight we have Sandra Yannonei, Tamara Selman and Katie Ellis. Not necessarily in that order because we didn't really have a chance to discuss the order, but we will. In case anybody wants to do a three minute open mic, please let me know. And we will be putting this on the YouTube. The It's About Time YouTube. And it will also be available on The Seattle Public Library podcast. So welcome and feel free to enjoy. And after we turn off the recording, we can even chitchat a little bit more. Our first reader tonight is going to be Katie E. Ellis. Katie is from Renton, Washington. Her debut mixed-genre collection "Home Water, Home Land" from Tolsun Press was recently published in September 2022. She is the author of three chapbooks: "Night Watch"—winner of the 2017 Floating Bridge Press chapbook competition—"Urban Animal Expeditions" and "Gravity", a single poem which was also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her work appears in many literary journals in the US and Canada. For more information visit www.KatyEEllis.com. I know that you've been appearing around town, even some live events recently, so we're very happy to have you willing to step back to being online with us tonight. So thank you. Welcome, Katie.

00:02:35 Katie

Thank you so much, Peggy. Actually, it's only the second time I've done an online reading, so it's a step up. Peggy and also just really appreciate you being here, especially under the circumstances, what's been happening in your life. So I really feel for you on that. So thank you for being here. So here's the book, probably backwards. I'm going to read from Home Water Homeland, and the book is a novel length prose poem and it's divided into three different chapters. And each of the chapters is kind of a momentous period of my life. And the first chapter sorry. So it's from the time that I lived in Canada as a university student at the University of Victoria. And so part of the book takes place in Victoria during that period. And part of the book takes place when I was excommunicated from my



childhood church. And then another part of it has to do with my time living in Tofino, which is on the west coast of Vancouver Island and kind of reorienting myself to my own sense of self and spirituality. And then the third part of the book takes place during the time of 9/11 when my husband, now husband, and I were traveling by train and trying to get back home during 9/11. So kind of how life changes before and after big moments is kind of maybe the theme of the book. So I'm going to start from the first chapter and I tried to choose kind of some holiday parts for my book. Well, it's that time. So this is a piece called New Skin.

00:04:56 Katie

"Not until I landed on Vancouver Island, my first year of university, did I learn the Canadian name Arbutus for the tree whose rust bark paper sheds in ragged swaths from a sheen trunk. A tree like the one I grew up with in my backyard and called Madrona. We kept two rabbits in a hutch next to our Madrona. In the Way backyard I'd gather the delicate bark, look through it to the sun, cover my forearms in a new skin, watch it flit to the ground. A strange snow in Canada. I was corrected when I pointed out a Madrona on the university campus, or beauty still. I peel that bark like a sunburn, press my forehead to the shiny flesh underneath."

00:05:50 Katie

And while I lived in Tofino, I lived on a sailboat which was named La Pinchoia. And this poem is called Northward Course.

00:06:05 Katie

"Northward Course. People know La Pinchoia by her octopus, bright green with flailing limbs and round blank eyes, hand painted on the white mainsail by the previous owner's girlfriend. Whenever we're out on the water, the townspeople wave or shout like pretend pirates. Ahoy, La Pinchoia. A homeless home. She seems to belong everywhere and to everyone. To get here she sailed from Chile on waves like a liquid ladder she heaved, always forward, without regard for the invisible rungs. She climbed the Tropic of Capricorn, the equator, the Tropic of Cancer on her northward course along the Pacific coast and into the Sailish sea. Goodass home. Where are you from again? Joe asked. He'd forgotten I was an American. When I tell him I grew up in Washington, just outside Seattle, he waves me off as if I'd mentioned the next village over. Says his people are from Washington too. He winks at me. Don't worry, he says, in my books you're as good as home. He says I'm as good as home. And I feel a few shards of my calcified guilt for leaving home drop away, stab the surface, sink below and leave concentric traces of the daughter I was sleepless mother. I caused old men laws dissolve. He says I'm as good as home. And flinty splinters of my guilt for not returning to the fold smack to the ground at my feet. I pick them up, rub them together in my heart until they start a little fire like the lanterns that hung before people decided to build sturdy lighthouses, divining the water's edge to sailors with nothing but a flame."

00:08:18 Katie



So thank you for the mute clapping.

00:08:26 Katie

So the next part is from a time it's kind of shifting to the section that has to do with my excommunication or separation from my family. Church, and this is kind of an extended I'm reading an excerpt from a section called To Go Ashore from a Ship, Disembark.

00:08:57 Katie

"Disembark my excommunication was a journey in many ships, the vessel doubt, the vessel's question and wonder and fear the vessel love. I hunkered starboard and portside in these ships cabins, staring out wide windows over khaki colored, often white capped water while studying for my linguistics, art history, or computer science exams, ordered a beer because I could Tater Tots or poutine. Hours in landless limbo. Canada and the United States became a dream of the other, a memory or herald of me. I went ashore, but never felt I disembarked. Disembark this. Do the opposite of one Sunday, I do not attend church. Embark. Instead, I meet the boy in a cafe where we sip peppermint tea, which tastes like freedom, cool and hot. Down my throat. He talks about our children, how they would be so fucking cute. I feel my face ember. For the first time, I allow myself to wonder what it would be like to not have children. Disembark this completely. My parents could have kicked me out of the house, cut me out of their lives, as Pastor advised, as many churches demand, as my oldest brother advocated and others considered. Instead, my parents told me on more than one occasion, we will never close our door to you. Embark. To this day, I'm unsure the date I officially disembarked the church to dwell in the land of the excommunicated. No letters from the church arrived for me at my parents home. Maybe Pastor announced my status to the congregation after divine service, like he did my aunt's unwed pregnancy. Though my parents never closed their door to me, I mostly stayed away, made a life for myself on Vancouver Island during the rest of my time at UVic, traveled many months over many years through Europe and Central America. Now I have my own family, my own home on an island just far enough away from where I grew up. But for as long as they live, I will cross the threshold of my parents door, the three of us tying and untying the tangled barnacle encrusted lines that hold us to one another's shores. Disembark this opposite or absence of akin to dismember to cut off the limbs of a person or animal, to partition or divide up. Remove a member akin to disremember to remember and forget parts. Embark. I am a member remembered as absent. Nearly three decades later, while helping decorate the Christmas tree in my parents assisted living apartment, I find an embroidered ornament dated 1989 and thoughtlessly say aloud, that was the year I started school in Victoria. And my father says, yes, you left and you never came back."

00:12:42 Katie

As I said, the third chapter... thanks, Sandy. The third chapter is set at the time of 9/11, and so it's many years following my time in Victoria. And in Victoria I kind of met someone that maybe lured me away from the church. You'll have to read the book to find out what happened there. But so this this

piece that I'm reading is from the train trip with my now husband, and the you refer to it as my husband and partner. Who kind of helped me get things on track. Pardon the pun. And each piece in this section is either happening pre-9/11 or post-9/11. And the title signifies that: Ignite, Pre.

00:13:47 Katie


"On the coast starlight from Seattle to Los Angeles. Water, sand, swamp and land veined westward out our train window. Everything remembered thrummed we met head on crossing Cherry Street at the lunch hour. You carried a styrofoam box crammed with Indian food wore your canvas coat with the Los Angeles McCarran International Airport patch over the heart. Later I would learn later I would learn your aunt's boyfriend work there and had left his coat when he left your aunt. We said hello because we knew each other through mutual friends for the past eight years, connected at various shows or parties. You walked backward with me to the side of the street you just come from and asked me to jot my phone number on the top of your takeout box. You watched the ink dig into the warm styrofoam like I engraved something sacred. Telephone lines and telephone lines and electrocardiogram of our unhurried arrival in Los Angeles. Did my pulse rate seek to mimic yours? Did our matching pulses match the beat of rail wheels on track? You said we became us right then on Cherry Street a gentle ignition followed by purr circle post we rode the rails through light and dark. You have heard my stories from the time before. You know my landmarks, water names and places I made home. Now this cabin next to this lake you row and I see the oars as clumsy skeletal extensions of your arms drawing circles half immersed, half arcing the surface. We have not lived every season here to know when the stars are bright enough or the lake still enough to mimic a night sky. But we will."

00:16:02 Katie

And I'll end with a piece that is in the middle chapter, which a lot of the pieces in that section are written to my daughter. And the whole book is actually dedicated to my daughter, who is approaching the age I was when everything hit the fan. So this is called Country Home.

00:16:33 Katie

"When you were born, I was seen again. My parents watched me expand my way to motherhood arriving with you, their 8th grandchild. I imagine they saw the chance you might bring me back to church. I know they hoped I would bring you to the baptismal font and I saw my parents again through you the fear and desire that your child be safe in mind, body, soul as I write this, your grandparents, my mother and father are still living. They are old and suffer health issues. So my brothers, sisters and I care for them as if they are our children. Your father and I used to take you to the San Juan Islands at Christmas when you were little and couldn't protest. Our families hated your absence. We'd splurge on a room at Rosario's on Orcas where we draped colorful strings of lights and decorated a tiny fake tree with ribbons and mini metallic balls. Our room warm and flickering in firelight, my own holy family holding ground and being held. There's a soaking pool at Rosarios, in the basement of the




Grand Mansion where it's dark and salty. I'm often there again, afloat a single sea star. Slow spin, tuning in to the dim lit water buoyed by salt. Motherless, fatherless, it's the biggest circle." Thank you.

00:18:12 Peggy

I think you'll see that I know at least Mary Ellen already has written, that your book is on her Christmas list. And I think I will add that myself absolutely, if only so that I can reread those poems. The one to your husband addressing him, I think, oh, that purr. And to have that love and to taste the peppermint tea tasting like freedom, I get it. Those are holiday gifts to me. So thank you. Well, and I'm so honored that you consider it or you pretend to consider it a step up to me online. You'll be able to then share this with your friends all over the world once it's ready for broadcast. So thank you so much. Next, if Tamara will say hello. Thank you. Tamara Sellman lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her first book, "Intention Tremor" (MoonPath Press, 2021) collects poetry and prose forms documenting life following her multiple sclerosis diagnosis in 2013. Her collection of speculative fiction, "Trust Fall", will be released in print and e-book editions by MCR Press in late 2022. She is currently at work on two book manuscripts: a magical realist novel, "Eminent Domain", and a post-apocalyptic novel, "The Flare", both of which blend elements of the Pacific Northwest landscape with her background in healthcare and her experience as a person living with multiple sclerosis. Her work has been nominated three times for the Pushcart Prize and has earned other awards. She works as a sleep educator, healthcare writer, and MS advocate/columnist. In her spare time, she's an avid kitchen gardener. Welcome.

00:20:15 Tamara

You should see all the tomatoes in my garage turning red from October. So many. It was a miracle. Thank you so much, Peggy. Thanks for everybody that's shown up tonight. And I'm just humbled to be reading with Katie and Sandy, who I have a huge amount of respect for. And anyway, last time I read from Intention Trevor, before it had been published, it was September 2020 and it came out in November. And Lana is here from Moon Path breath. So I'm just beside myself get to see you here. And so this time around, I'm actually going to pull a similar stunt and read from another book I'm working on that hasn't been published yet. My short story collection, by the way, has been pushed into 2023, but it'll be soon. Okay. So I'm going to dedicate these poems to my peers who I'm reading with today or tonight, because I know that we all share the same deep love for this landscape and seascape that is the Pacific Northwest and beyond. And I think I'm just going to read some poems that will take you some places that I've been. So the first one is the Quakes River Invocation and I wrote this poem speaking of Lana, I wrote this poem in a writing retreat at Ocean Shores with Lana. It's been a while, it's been a minute. I wrote a bunch of stuff there, and that was one of the most prolific and productive writing retreats I've ever been on. But the Queens River is in southwest Washington, coastal part of the Olympics, down, getting down there, and this is one of my favorites. So I thought I'd start with this because I kind of like this as a poem that celebrates all the wonderful people that are in all my writing communities and groups and critiques and all of that, just so Quakes River Invocation.



00:22:20 Tamara

"Then came gravel, came bridges, ferns crowding the road, dust and pillows behind us. We were never alone, instead, remote we were, there returned our pilgrimage, theirs. Each summer a divination more shadows mosquitoes, bits of robin's egg blue broken into triangles by the shadow canopy or else lost inside old band's beard the crucible barren cold upon arrival are circle energies hard pan earth tamped layers, needles a party of gathered kindling salutations the red hand pump cranked buckets of water dripping many paths. Then our fire a pot over flame one blessing broken bread, bottles of red wine past the harmonica bleeds wood smoke a sacred perfume a night cathedral a fur and large witnesses we inscribe regrets newsprint fed to this altar ashes flushed to the sky a holy smudge laughter at families lead us midnight blind to tents trenched inside sigils pitched beneath a web of tarps high expectant. Then came the morning's dewy baptism, Roosevelt tears."

00:24:05 Tamara

All right. That's such a favorite place of mine. Thank you. This is inspired by a camping trip to Boeing Bay on Whidbey Island. It was not long after the US. Went to war with Iraq. And this poem has a funny story. It was a finalist in the Lyric Recovery Festival in 2004. And I was invited to go to that event because the crowning, the way they capped off the whole festival was to have the top ten finalists read at Carnegie Hall. And so I went to New York City because I could be reading at Carnegie Hall. And the rule was that you had to memorize it, which is, like, really hard for me. So I literally got in at midnight that night before I was downtown Manhattan, walking all around Central Park, reciting this poem in the freezing February 1 weather, pretty much thinking everyone thinks I'm crazy because I'm walking around in this park reciting poetry, but maybe I just look like everybody else, who knows? And so I had it figured out. I had it memorized. I was good to go. And then I was 11th, so I didn't get to read it. So but that's okay because the guy who got 10th place who did get to read, he came farther than I had, and he was a 91 year old man who wrote this poem about the Flying Wallendas in his childhood. So I was like, Dude, you go right ahead. And it was an amazing poem, so I was just happy to be there. All right, so the first line of this poem is also its title.

00:25:50 Tamara

"After midnight, I'm reduced to a flashlight shaft on a campground trail, each breath an invasion of stillness under great plains of sky. Sharp stars blaze icy hot through the canopy's branches. As I penetrate a wall of stalking shadows, meteors bombard the deep blue field overhead. Blinking beacons of satellites and planes emerge through their shrapnel, transport me to the farthest reaches, where only as a child had I ever ventured, laid supine and steel across a moss bound picnic table near the extinguished campfire 30 years hence. Traversing these woods, I cower to imagine the noiselessness of missiles launched in the sky, mapped by these same lights half a world away. Just as I'd feared at seven. The waitlist siege that is the mere idea of galaxies now is then the sudden crick of a lone heron across water pulls me back to what's real fragrant and uneven earth beneath me. Hard autumn air, the loyal moon."

00:27:09 Tamara

Okay, I got to go on the stage at Carnegie Hall. That was really awesome. It was, like, bone chilling. So cool. Okay, this next poem is dedicated to a character known as the Bee Pollen Man, who was a real guy who lives in the woods near Sunset Falls on the Lewis River in Skimania County. We used to go up there when I was a kid, a teenager, and hang out with this guy and get high. And then later I went up there on a solo hike as an adult, and I walked right in on his camp, and I felt like I'd really invaded a space. So I want to write this poem because he's special. First line of this poem is the title.

00:27:55 Tamara

"A late hike and I am caught were black cedar hides dusks incandescence deferring me to the tunnel's glowing mouth. In that pale meadow I noticed as a shadow the man deftly, carving a fungus from detritus spooked. We share the prolonged gaze, dark into dark, searching for the other's eyes. Then he flutters a thick moth into gray grass, revealing in his absence wild quarters a bedroll and lean to a stump for a seat. Wood smoke snakes from his earthy kitchen bides an organic feast to which I'm not invited. A tea of dandelion stewing fiddleheads, a plank of trout hanging over the old holes of perpetual fire, while a water hollowed burl bowl cradles naked pheasants eggs. My dinner, in the meantime, is in a box, in an ice box and yet another box, a winnebago which sits in a clean, paved site of cold fires and monotonous moths where Johnson to the woods are not for hiding. I wish the rustic's return, if only to make my own is worthy."

00:29:13 Tamara

I don't know what happened to him. All right. I can't wait to read this poem. Thank you. Because just yesterday I met with the poet Sue Hyland. I was down on Baymerge Island and we had a nice little chat, and we were talking about poems that memorialize places that no longer exist, and she has several in her new book. And so I remembered I wrote this poem, and it was one of my favorite ones. I don't know why, but it has to do with Hood Canal Bridge, okay? And back when I first moved here in '99, it had this kind of semi floating platform under the floating bridge, and you could climb down there and do whatever. We would go down there and go fishing, right? So they rebuilt it and they took away the platform so you can't go down there anymore, which makes me sad. I have a lot of really amazing memories of doing that. So this is a poem that's sort of a dedication to that. And something you need to be reminded of if you're not familiar with Hood Canal itself is that it's an extremely deep channel

00:30:14 Tamara

that provides the passage for the nuclear submarines that go to and from the basic banger. So just keep that in the back of your mind.

00:30:23 Tamara

"Sea monster on the public fishing platform beneath the Hood Canal Bridge crab fishermen fling baited rings of turkey necks, salmon heads, pussy boots, fishermen's bladder timed to break between

tides. Sometimes tackle gets pulled under. Volumes of sea water pour through this ice aged crevasse and back again, leaving slack tide to stop time for only ten minutes. When taut ropes angle to places unseen under the bridge, family men with pensions can be found scaling the platform's seaside walls where they dangle on rusted runs to Holland with frozen rope stung hands. Here they bought with whiskey money or they bring up the freight end and are consoled free beer from a neighbor's cooler. None can see in water deep than the Dungeness that they're fishing for. The trident probing in blackness, its sleek steel fins snaring underwater gossamer lines, bait tackle, unimpressed."

00:31:36 Tamara

And I have one more poem. Thank you. I wrote this one during.... I got on these silent writing retreats, and I think some of you who know me know this and this is something I do like, on a quarterly. And I it's I love it. It's how I get a lot of writing done. And this one was in Port Townsend, and it was the summer of 2015, which was a big drought summer, a really bad one. And that was I wrote this poem on my mother's birthday and it followed on her death earlier in the year. So this poem is actually originally meant to be put into my book, Intention Tremor, and then for some a bunch of reasons, I took it out. But it's worth noting that the orange color that I suggest in this poem or bring up is the color for the awareness, color for multiple sclerosis. I just want to say thank you again, Peggy, for including me in this conversation tonight and to everyone for coming out and listening. And also, Katie, I wanted to say before I read this that I kind of had a fun encounter online with Katie because she had just come from a place that I had gone camping and then we were talking about the Chipmunks and it was just so funny. So it's an interesting combination of the three of us tonight because we all have some kind of roots in this land. It's such a pleasure to be reading with all of you. So this poem is called Zinnias.

00:33:02 Tamara

"I bought them at the Fred Meyer in August from the clearance section. They're stiff downy stems of rust orange flowers with buds, tight black fists at stem side just waiting to burst. Nobody ever waters the flowers at the home stores. Maybe this is because it is cheaper to sell them wilted for a half price than it is to keep them quenched and alive. Maybe it's just a case of managing overhead. This year of drought, though, was the year to stay on top of watering. I had cobalt blue pots to fill my earlier attempts at calibracoa, supported by a week's vacation in no means to keep them alive against dry winds. I'd thrown flowers into every pot I had to memorialize the sudden loss of my mother, and it pained me to see the dry stems, dropped blossoms and fallow leaves where I wanted to see nothing more than her leathery face and that smile full of big teeth. Xenias are all that remain alive in August in a drought year. They remind me of my grandmother, her old school gardens of daffodils, begonias bush roses of my mother too, who even with scoliosis, kept her head high through multiple surgeries against the assaults of crippling arthritis, who outlived lung cancer by 17 years and didn't die of cancer at all. Especially from her. I learned that living fully means knowing the promise, compost the value. In heirlooms I delight, as did my grandmother, in discovering plants that thrived where others failed. I laugh at myself for forgetting the magic of evening primrose until I see it outshine the full

moon. I respect the pink lacey edges of lawn daisies, the parachutes of dandelion pompons as living things. My mother, my grandmother never complained of weeds or lamented lost flowers. This was circle of life stuff. Instead they dropped in crispy orphans rescued from the hardware store 50% off. It's almost dusk. The soil is cornmeal around my hand spade as I release old dead roots, gently replace them with my wilting Fred Meyer zinnias their brash and uppity orange blazes hiding behind yellowing foliage. Before I go to bed, I check them one more time like they are my own children. They don't look like much. Laggy with wrinkled petals, fatigued by neglect. In the morning, the bright eastern exposure redefines this place of their rebirth. When I open the door to find the blue pot on fire, every orange bud open and alive. To the future. Thank you. That is such a beautiful home. They all were. But that one is like a gift to the heart tonight. Thank you so much. I came out of the car and it's as though I saw the moon for the first time. And so you're lying in the evening primrose, even outshining the full moon. Beautiful." Thank you.

00:36:33 Peggy


So glad to have you all here in your little love fest, your reunion. And as Jennifer pointed out, it looks like I'm in a circus. And I love that Sandy's hat matches perfectly. She is our ringleader. How perfect that. I had anointed her host/co-host for a while, so I was inspired by that moon reference to read a little something I had a chance to write today. So this is for my best friend since 7th grade, Julie Layton.

00:37:14 Peggy

"On the day the decision was made to stop treatment for Julie, I saw money floating in the air this last week. I barely remember my dreams. But the money was real. A crisp bill and an updraft outside the hospital window, in an inner courtyard above the catwalks that lead to the workings of this monster of healing. I chose to see the money as lucky were there without a red envelope. Before my father died, he asked when will Julie be here? I won't pretend he knew. Their paths were parallel, although they were his aging hers. What the doctor called today a horrible disease. And yet to see the money darting up was so like my dad. The way he brought home bills fresh from the mint where he worked at the Federal Reserve. At that moment I was talking about the decision. It's the 8th today, the day of the month that Julie was born. My fellow 1960 baby, my best friend of 50 years. I don't believe in signs, but I leaped up, my hand hitting the glass as though I could catch the money. So perhaps I believe in signs after all, even when it means letting go."

00:39:01 Peggy

That's my little homage today. I swear to God, nobody else saw it but. I saw money. It was floating, floating up. Anyway, well, and here's our most wonderful booster. And then we have an open mic after Sandy's reading. I'd like to introduce Sandra Yannone's debut collection "Boats for Women" was published by Salmon Poetry in 2019. Her second collection, "The Glass Studio", is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry. She currently hosts Cultivating Voices LIVE Poetry Sundays on Facebook via Zoom, and monthly for The Collectibles Lesbian Trading Card Reading Series with Headmistress Press. She



earned her B.A. in writing and literature from Wheaton College (MA); an M.F.A. from Emerson College; and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Currently, she is a Member of the Faculty at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. I think one of the last times you read, we were having sort of an Emerson College reunion online. I'll go by there tomorrow and thank them.

00:40:39 Sandy

Oh my gosh, what a reading so far. Thank you, Peggy. Thank you Katie. Thank you Tamara. And thanks to each of you for being here today. Tonight it's late for Peggy. 3 hours later, so I really appreciate I've done some hosting that way from a later time zone and what a gift for you to be here holding space for us today. And if I can just say thank you to my Cancer Lifeline writing group that gave me the time and space to have a few minutes to write earlier today before I went back to the hospital. Thank you. It allows me to kind of cherish this day. Thank you. I'm so glad you were able to market today with a poem and have that time and space and it makes me continue to have so much gratitude for what poetry offers us in our most challenging times, in our most joyous times and the entire spectrum between. And I'm going to start off with a reading I'm going to start off the reading tonight with a poem that I wrote in honor of a poet, Lucy Brockbrido, that I had studied with in Boston in the late eighties and into the early nineties. And this was a poem that I read. I had just finished it when I was reading at it's about time in what was not only the last live reading in person for you folks, but also the last reading I've done in person. And the poem then went on to get published in Poetry Ireland Review and also in Brownstone The Brownstone Anthology, and it was just nominated for a push cart, which is a cool thing, which is a super cool thing. So in honor of all of those things, the synergy of all those things happening and the poem really taking some traction from sharing it at It's About Time for the very first time. Here is a poem called Gratitude Workshop Notebook Number 12/19/91 for Lucy Brockbrido.

00:43:40 Sandy

"She said poetry is about demons and to trust the interior of ice. I ruminate over all the advice we must endure in this world a precarious stack of dishes at the edge of the sink or a game of midnight freeze tag in a field of no moon. She said don't apologize, don't explain. If 14 fish swim past, what does the 15th look like? The darkest hour of the recurring bruise. She said court tension and risk. They don't exchange greasy hands, they don't even shake names about doubt. It's terminal. More than a blessing, forgiveness is another night of testimony. How is it you remain unmarried? I told myself it was the mattress, I had a bed. I did not lie. I find fire delectable and can sleep. She said be careful not to be too good. So I pretend to fidget with some anger in simplicity, the simple let the day bear out its breakdown of horoscopes like coins that disappear into the glass base of a parking meter. All description must be revelation. I can forgive only the first gray hair and in response to my longing I burn the toast."

00:45:41 Sandy



So that poem was cobbled together from throat, from lines I had thrown away in 1991 from that notebook. And I brought I and I brought it back together to create a poem out of these discarded lines that were just strewn all throughout this book. And I'm continuing to do that with these notebooks from the past. So in light of the past, I want to take us back just a month after I read at its about time in February 2020 to early March 2020 and a look back at what it was like to experience COVID in those early days. This is a poem called Cognitive Overload.

00:46:52 Sandy

"Virtually invites disaster. 19 and all of the letters are separated so they don't touch each other. The words are spread out? It's all about social distancing on the page? Because now I live inside a ghost town? This is the time to release all the secrets in the sidewalks cracks? Let the letters congregate like the traffic I once swore at under my breath. Let these lines be stronger than those broken at every anxious checkout counter with people hoarding their favored necessities, lost in their unrequited agonies of separation that will call social distancing. For now, I will permit myself only five minutes inside the store. I mean. Ander Paverness isles in search of brown eggs. Organic, of course. Outside, the ghosts of Girl Scouts and their sashes still linger from days ago and all those cookies, all those boxes, aluminum cans of tuna might be the food that saves me I am determined to say hello to anyone in this ghost town's lonely open store someone nearly accidentally approaches. I see the terror in her body's. Jerk of the cart. Even her eyes swerve away. No words exchange, no whites of her teeth. I try not to blame her. I'm the virus in her eyes. A stranger in an empty, safe way, buying tuna. Maybe this is the moment I should start breathing poetry from my lungs. Distract her back to what brand of isolation remains expired on the shelves back home, I am reduced to a husk of screened in work learning platforms. Learning platforms at the speed of worry because computers are the only thing I'm allowed to touch in my ghost town. I suspect the screen's glow has mutated into some people's moonlight. If I could ransack some joy, I would demolish all the screens, declare looting my new employment. Meanwhile, a friend writes a poem about being an undertaker. He is not an undertaker, but like me, he's caught in this century's undertow. Will this poem be my final lover? My fingertips grope for the skin of these keys. May you recover some comfort in this day's distant light."

00:50:28 Sandy

So that's a little intense. But it was very they were very and continued to be very, very fraught times. I've got the masks all around me to kind of prove it and all of that. Well, for those of you who know my poetry, I have a penchant for the historical. And there's a historical moment from a poem in Votes for Women that I thought I'd elevate tonight to take us back to Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1917, there was a very famous explosion that happened in the city. On the morning of December 6, two ships collided and created a catastrophe beyond compare. Only five years after Halifax had been where the bodies of the Titanic survived. The bodies of those who had been lost on the Titanic were brought to be buried. Those who could not be sent home because of the cost. So Halifax, after those five years,

became known as the City of Sorrow. They named themselves that. And this is a poem that harkens back to that refers to that anniversary on December 6, 1917.

00:52:03 Sandy

"Halifax, 1917. Then and never again. When I contemplate her voice as producing that smile, that outward manifestation of her breast, I travel inside my own complicated anatomy, induce what I can to give back to this love scorched earth. What was it that Shakespeare said about out? Love is a smoke and is made with the fumes of size. The threat of morning fog inhabiting the COVID is why the lighthouse keeps keeper sleeps at night restless in the tower. But what if that man made fire that burned the harbor down? What could have anticipated two ships colliding into a tirade like that one that conflicted the properties of fate and stole the air from the lungs of 2000 lives in one horrible breath? All of Halifax inhaled smoke and either woke to the nightmarish hot sun surviving outside their steaming windows or never broke from sleep, I tell myself this story again. Why? To keep my fire from burning its death defying lie."

00:53:39 Sandy

Yeah. So if you read about the Halifax explosion, close to 2000 people died from the fire and there was a huge winter storm that was taking place on that morning. It's quite a remarkable disaster of immense proportion and at that time was considered one of the greatest catastrophes in man made catastrophes in the history of the world at that time. Well, let me lighten the load up a little, just ever so slightly. And I'm going to read a poem that is going to be appearing in the next book, kind of going back and forth with some that will be in the glass studio and some that will be some that have been in boats for women. I was thinking when I decided to read this poem tonight, I was thinking about how we just lost this week the amazing singer Christine McVeigh from Fleetwood Mac and was thinking about all the complications that stardom and fame and being in the limelight brought that group. And I have a huge love affair with someone who also had a complicated relationship with fame and that is none other than David Cassidy. So this is a poem that I wrote with the group Poets on the coast. There's some folks here in the room here that are part of that group from one of the amazing prompts that Kelly Russell Agadon and Susan Rich have been holding that space for women writers for over ten years now. And this is one that came from one of their prompts. It's called David Cassidy Writes Me a Fan letter from the Great Painted Bus Beyond.

00:56:04 Sandy

"From the pages of those all those Tiger Beat magazines you purchased with your allowance I became more like sugar with each poster you pulled from the center folds staples. I never liked that my crotch was always pinned in the crease that girls tugged at my sleeves, ripped off my clothes and shredded what was left of me at my concerts. I was hoping to be a firefly that feasted on night flowers, leaving my scent behind with all my original songs, the ones no one heard over the din of those top hits that ABC's Money moguls shoveled into my mouth during box lunches on the set I had to sign thousands of postcards to girls I'd never met. I was drowning, Sandy, drowning in the fountain

of teen idol fame and I didn't know how to swim. Who does in that kind of water? So I vanished into those cheap newsprint pages of 16 magazine. I became a papered ghost and only the drugs and sex told me that I was alive. What can I say? Why am I risking this from the great beyond to share with you? I think you know better than the lyrics to I Think I Love You. Every poem is a spotlight that shines the light back into your eyes. You need to keep them open to honest desires. Don't get caught underneath the underteau of the trap doors. Wait. Come on. You know how to escape, to get happy. You almost do it every day except you act like it's your shadow side. You never let yourself fully embrace the miracle of you. I sang all those songs on those albums that I know you still sing when you are alone or driving with your sister in her van. I know you gave a private concert to Tara Hardy in your living room. That you have two microphones at the ready to practice when you feel inspired by my lips open to songs you wore down the needles on your record player to hear over and over again. I wasn't ready for everything that came next. After the gold records and the show's opening credits dressed in mod I should have shaken off that Partridge Family tree sooner. But this isn't my ending. This is your beginning. So come on, stay happy. Swallow my songs, my prayers for that girl long ago who loved me as no one could retire all those faded fan magazines you know you are happier when you are unlocked from inside the glass house where you've been waiting your whole life to sleep."

00:59:36 Sandy

Well, just two more quick ones. And again, thank you so much. Everybody was really interesting because while the reading was going on, there were so many connections to the Katie and Tamara's work and I wanted to kind of so I wanted to kind of change things up a little bit from what I had originally intended to read. And one of the poems that I'm not going to read, I have a poem that has the Great Wolendas in it, believe it or not. It's amazing, right? But because I've got my little top hat on, I thought I'd read a poem from Votes for Women that I don't often read because it's got a bit of the ringmaster in it. This is called the Betrayers Reply.

01:00:34 Sandy

"I love the jacket of the ringmaster. It's red satin lining, circa 92. His center ring roving gives him away his spotlight fabricates his grin and I half expect the three rings to rise like the solid white plates the clowns spin on thin wooden dowels in their hands gloved white. This is how I learn to set the table for two to respect the blade serrated desire always to face the dish. I studied the pounce and claw of the knife which knows how to wait

01:01:21 Sandy

for the hand that sometimes never comes. This is how I cut the back, turned the teeth of what I do. And it's the skin that produces the scar, not the original bite. So forget blame, it will only undress you. Once again my hands outcast themselves, they roll up my sleeves."

01:01:51 Sandy

And I'll end with a poem, the last poem in the book from Boats for Women with a little hope on this December night with again such gratitude to all of you for being here in Zoom. And for those of you who have read On Cultivating Voices, attended Cultivating Voices and those who've been with me on this journey. Some of you have been with me in this room for many, many years. I'm beyond grateful. This is a villanelle called the Girl who Catches Everything.

01:02:34 Sandy

"We have all the time in the world in pants pockets, in the space between our breasts, on our tongues, and in the future twirling over us like a girl's fire baton hurled into the stadium sky in her hands she will catch all she has all the time the world will not throw her off balance despite the swirl of the crowd anticipating her drop the stress on the edge of every tongue. In the future twirling naked in bed we will remember these baton girls we did not risk the chance to undress when we had all the time in the world. We will remember their hair every girl we did not allow our fingers to address or our tongues or the future twirling away from their spectacular bodies. We will pearl our lives with each minute lost the rest we will have all the time in the world and our tongues where the future dwells." Thanks, everybody, and I'm looking forward to hearing your poems. Of course.

01:04:00 Peggy

Thank you so much. There's always such synchronicity. Lovely. And you also re-inspired me something that's been a great source of entertainment and is yet another pandemic. Silver lining is, in the early days, I sorted all the letters that I saved from people for all the different years. And so when I realized I needed to be here in Boston and was flying out, you know, just the next morning, I went down to the basement and there were the little envelopes there's, all the letters I'd collected from my dad. There were all the letters I'd collected from Julie. And so I've been taking them in. And especially the first couple of days, Julie would look at it and they start back in about 1977 with, like, red writing and Strawberry Stationery and then going through the aerograms from when she was traveling in Greece. And, you know, all the different things addressed to me, whether it was just a peg or my little buddy or each of the addresses. And so there's just so much material. And I hope everybody saves all the letters that anybody ever says because they are a guide to life. And I wish the internet hadn't really put a change to that in the 90s because the exchange of letters, especially from the, is just such a treasure that I have now. And your time and what you've done with Lucia Brockbrido and your notes always inspires me to do what Tamara called tonight. Like upcycling. Let us all upcycle. Any materials that we find in our homes. Always inspiring. All right, well, Ann Spires or Spears, remind me of your pronunciation. Please join us now, Ann Spires with our open mic.

01:06:11 Ann

I'd like to read from Back Cut, which Black Heron put out last year, and it's monologue. It's the husband and wife is post World War II. They are making a living cutting ferns for the floors or digging razor clams on the beach, and she's sort of backing into isolation and he just home from World War II, is addicted. At one point she goes to a friend and this poem has been upcycled. It used to be about


so Junior Smith, who was my friend, and when I had to leave a cabin on the beach on Fashion Island because the next storm was going to take it away, I grieved for about two years. And so I started to garden with her for free. And she taught me so much about Northwest flora and gardening and editing and leaving it alone. So in here the wife, the character in this book, is visiting because she's asking for some kind of help.

01:07:28 Ann

"Wife visiting on the kitchen table, socky warm and a tin cup with an opium chaser brood from her garden's poppies fluttering black hearts, pods milk green. She asks me to deflate the rising red dove. She returns all favors. A twig with glowy lichen bumping its wet bark. A long borrowed book, oysters breaded and fried in a lake of good butter. She returns my lost coat, its buttons tightened heavier, thread smarter knots. An almost matching button replaces the lost one. In and out, stitches making a cross, filling the window. Her garden twists into a gentle mass. Vines kneel, scarlet runner beams abandoning the string frame on the straight up rose, she says I can do nothing for you. And so Junior went to her reward a couple of months ago, and I never go out in my garden without thinking of her and what she taught me. So this is again. I guess I should find a he one, but the wife speaking. A lot of men one in Seattle after the war. He was small, unfixed, cigarette hanging from his dry bottom lip, a shadow in our boarding house just mustered out of the 106th infantry. Barbed wires, scars fresh on his hands, drunk on more than victory. Out here he fills our cabin he built with Watson boards reeking of brine and rusted nails pulled from sheds collapsed. Out here he is a gathering storm. His voice cracks reverbs off sea cliffs. His stories filter through a crowd, lightning sieving through fur. His heat melts the room. Some women hold sour memories. Let me, Lord, keep the generous moments, my true love standing when women enter the room. He first with a cup of boiled coffee, proffered from his two hands, warming our pilfered crockery, his hands shaking with use. Two I did. Late potatoes, purples scabby, small, a cross of rosette blues and some orphan up Dicky River roots spreading out and out. Bumped with spud potatoes all winter. Just the size to soften as the first boil. No need for the water to giggle for an hour the then watched boil over burnt starch marking the heavy in the clouds hangs mid air, condenses on my cheeks into muck. I plant potatoes, eyes blind, skins ringing. Coffee." Thank you.

01:11:00 Peggy

Thank you, Ann. Thanks for taking us out of the 2022 back to the 47. I had to look up real quick with Sandy's Boats for Women. I know that there was another horrible event in Peggy's Cove Halifax, but I realized that was the Swiss air crash. But Halifax. Really? They take it on the coast, don't they? Anyway, I really hope that things do calm down for all of us. Better health, but if not better health in our bodies, at least continued health for independent bookstores, which I understand have been thriving through the pandemic. And for creativity all around. Because clearly it's what is always going to get us through. And thank you to all the participants, people like Sandy and the people who have inspired you and poets on the coast and all of those who have just made the literary world so rich.



Thank you. I'm going to end the recording and hope that many of you will be reading with us. Contact me anytime to schedule for 2023.

