



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series, Meeting 371

00:00:01 Peggy

I'm very happy that for reading number 371, we've had some incredibly talented writers from this year's 2020, Jack Straw Writers Program - JackStraw.org. Our first reader is Rob Arnold, Rob Arnold's poems have appeared in Ploughshares, Gettysburg Review, Poetry Northwest, Hyphen, RED INK, Yes Poetry, and The Ocean State Review, among others. His work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has received support from the Somerville Arts Council and Artist Trust. He is a Program Director and Curator of Events at Hugo House, Rob.

00:00:46 Rob

Thank you so much. I'm going to read a long poem which sort of feels apropos for this moment with the pandemic. It's a meditation on love and loss and distance which seems really sadly appropriate for our times. So these are nine part poem called "The Channel."

00:01:11

One. We had come again to the longshore to look outward as if into the depths of memory. We're alone. House lights burn with secrecies where the black tide raised and the moon's negation filtered down. How long could we return here? Hoping our solace would come back to us. The naked waves distant aurora reflecting in the moisture on our bodies. One by one, our beacons have gone out until the beachside arc. It was like this every time the two of us coming together, cupped in the illusions that played over the water's skin, like moonlight or like something unnamable that passed between us, swiftly, before we could control ourselves and was gone.

00:02:15

Two. Our waking bodies unbecome us, wraith like, too frail for the permanents around them. This chair, this pale morning light, resolving as the eyes adjust. These lives mistaken for dream. These dreams that seem a life's negation, punctuating our existence. So images from life appear as dreams through a window. Teenage lovers on the pier, a freighter yawing imperceptibly in the bay, the paths that we might walk. These tracings through the condensation that cloud are emergence into the real. Heart chrysalis. Heart paralysis. Beautifully cold like cruelty made pure.

00:03:17

Three. The shape of the world is the ship pulling from harbor. Huge, disquieting carving its hulk through the fluid's passageway. Tiny light of the barrios beyond the airport man-made islands. The

new volcanism that forges neighborhood from industrial scrap. So what heaviness pulls at the piers knuckles, as the ship steers into the open bay. It's like that's how our distance particulates each evening in the traces we might leave behind. The you and the I infused in this place. Times when we've walked on the dock pursued, by vacancy. Or, when vacancy walked in our step, while the world closed seamless around us. This is us revealed some smallness without center, aurora-less and bare. To none things drifting in the tides to try us.

00:04:31

Four. Voluminous suddenly violence, the water surged against the retainer wall last night. Shifting from some huge weights displaced offshore, or just out of sight and the depths of the channel. I think of you, these wild nights - landscape, quaking with uncertainty. Where have you gone from now, someone to ask? Always and always, as something in the water strains and goes white, strains and goes dark as though an answer.

00:05:10

Five. Wind stirs over the channel like something animal. Fictive. A thing imagined like something that belongs to the night, or to a sense of time collapsed between us. The way we'd converge two creatures, in pain for each other. Down to the single fold that divides us. Flesh from flesh, from where we'd intersect furiously under the foamy lights of the warehouses. The blazing turbulence, spreading our impression across the wharves and water. So night continues down its avenues of bone, the demon in me, greets the demon in you.

00:06:00

Six. But what do we owe them? Our failures. Distorted mirrors reflecting their emptiness inward. Ruinous nights when we lived in disappointments as in love. Neither sin, nor sacrament, no offering that no one takes upon the tongue. So the bay goes still. So the waters pulse out somewhere beyond awareness to where our bodies calcify. Dream-addled, regretful drifting toward a sun that never comes.

00:06:45

Seven. Without you, I imagine you. Standing at the entrance to the channel, sleet streaked nights, I surrender myself. Then I'm flying west along, the rib work of the earth. It's curved, corporeality, and you somewhere out there, a body within the body, the winds exhalation smoothing you over. What have I left, but that which leaves? Which is to say that, which sleeps, that which stares each of us down. As elsewhere in the distance, even as we flee it, the world's deepness may sunder us.

00:07:36

Eight. As before we come to the place where the within filled up, and its confusion spilled out like a haze into the bay. Something passing overhead, the moon icing everything. So we looked north toward the city with its difficulties that we failed to take upon ourselves. As elsewhere and all around us simply devastatingly, the words came for us.

00:08:18

Nine. Sleep again, eluded me. So I walked down to the channel where I've seen the waters go wild some nights, threatening to come ashore knuckling at the break wall, with the dumb, urgency of the inanimate. But the tide was out, everything seemed empty and there was a lightness in the East that wasn't quite potential. Soon the mysteries of nightfall would again be replaced by simple object hood. The day's dreamlessness we cannot escape. What use is hope if it comes to this? Heavens peeled back to reveal our dreck, detritus beneath. A smell of tar and seaweed was coming off of the mudflats amid the jumble of rock and fallen highlands. I was thinking of the love I lost, then the sun cresting over all of us, the power plants, the abandoned warehouse and the channel's gaping question mark beyond. Okay. I think I have enough time to read a sort of coda to that poem, it's set in the same location but it's not the same poem. It's called, "At Pleasure Bay." That was the first time I'd read that poem out loud in public - so huzzah [laughter]. Okay this is called, "At Pleasure Bay."

00:09:57

At Pleasure Bay, where gulls feed off the carry and crab and reek of the thrusting, foam striped sea, sci-fi orbs of the treatment plant winking off against the Ship Street concrete blocks and degenerate dark of the bulwark. Where fat-bellied planes scape the horizon, in container cranes zone. Where night advances, down its long path, into the breach dividing, end from eternity. Is a simplistic to say the water was black? It was black, and deepening blue, orange in places - salty, rotten and sweet. It was light, it was shade and surface and mystery beneath. Is it simplistic to be gripped by memory when it's gravity? Where the light crests overhead, and the wind is everywhere at once frothing the harbor with dappled influence. You were the one who had come here to be pulled from your body, to feel the pulse of the harbor and be swept by it. You were the one walking to escape the tremors of remembrance, wandering out there at the boundary taking in its seductive nothingness. As you always had been. The carapace cracks. Some version of you always straining tumults, the damage of the shell, will slip under the waves and be gone. Thank you.

00:11:44 Peggy

Thank you very much for honoring us by being your first ones to hear that, "The Channel" out loud. And I have to say that it's a reminds me of watching the debate a little bit last night, when they said that Kamala Harris broke the fourth wall because I feel like you were, I'm sure all of us, each feel you were reading it only to us. [Laughter] So wonderful intimacy. Okay. Our next Jack Straw reader tonight is to Ching-In Chen.

00:12:19

Ching-In Chen is a genderqueer Chinese American hybrid writer, community organizer, and teacher. They are author of *The Heart's Traffic* and *recombinant* (winner of 2018 Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry), as well as the chapbooks *how to make black paper sing* and *Kundiman for Kin: Information Retrieval for Monsters*. No wonder you like that monster idea. Chen is also co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence within Activist Communities* and *Here Is a Pen: an Anthology of West Coast Kundiman Poets*. They have received fellowships from Kundiman, Lambda, Watering Hole, Can Serrat and *Imagining America* and are part of *Macondo* and *Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation* writing communities. They are currently Assistant Professor at the University of Washington Bothell. Welcome Ching-In.

00:13:21 Ching-In

Thank you, Peggy and to my Jack straw cohort, and all of you for being here and maybe all the future viewers, hopefully, we will have some future viewers.

00:13:34

So I learned a few hours before our reading of the passing of a friend, who I knew in Houston. I moved here from Houston last year, and this friend's name is Monica Roberts, who she's a creator of the award-winning blog TransGriot. She's been covering the trans community since 2006. She was a brilliant community leader and gatherer. So I'm going to dedicate my reading tonight to Monica Roberts in her memory. If you don't know who she is, I hope you go and look her up because she has done so many amazing things, and she has really impacted and changed the world for for trans folks. And since I met her, when I was living in Houston, I'm going to read poems from my time in Houston in her honor.

00:14:29

"Spell for Safety." For the trans and gender non-conforming students. Walking the stage at Lavender Graduation

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Maybe it was you learning to walk home, crosswise. Your own safety valve. You who trained a tongue, who chose a name, listening for reflection, speak back. You. I'm calling you. Threw yourself at arguments end, slept borrowed and burned. Who filled in space of the wisecrack who emptied the sidewalk, who cleared the toxic table. You breathe down your own street. Rose tall stitched, built your own table. Lit candles for the living who couldn't make it back. The invitations, the city, the hauntings and the hatchets, the you, the you, the you walking home safe. Opening the door setting the table for company.

00:15:38

I'm going to share two pieces from that time, or sorry three pieces - two more pieces. So this is a lyric essay called "Elgin" and this is dedicated to the street that I lived on for a time. "Elgin." I write this at a desk a 10-minute drive away from the house we vacated in 48 hours - when our landlord in Norway - question mark, in Pakistan - question mark and Netherlands - question mark, lost her house in foreclosure. Yesterday we drove back curious to check on the house after Hurricane Harvey receded, and saw the closed fence, the overfull trash, the height of that grass. We wanted to see if the house was still standing, still holding space, still breathing ghosts. The night before we arrived to transplant into our rented house, a ladder walks off missing. Two snug air conditioners. The heat decides for us that we will eat cold today. We walk through the back door, pass the bare walls, say hello to a discarded bike with flat tires, to the open door of a molding freezer. Small curios live in the house, a trail

00:16:58

of cloth elephants, a dream of fabric the stretch of a wood table. Remnants from other bodies, some wildlife still scurrying under the counter tops, still eating against the grain. Our almost neighbor, an older African-American man, who parks in the grass field lot next to our old house, almost daily, was not there. His truck often running sometimes playing old soul was not nestled up on the grass. His black plastic table was not set up. His friends were not keeping him company, he was not napping with one eye on the street. Diagonal across the street from the front door we don't use, an enormous orange complex, the new recreation center finished. A renovated Emancipation Park originally purchased by the Colored People's Festival and Emancipation Park Association for Juneteenth celebrations. While we watched it go up, handwritten letters, are put in the mail slot for our absentee landlord. Do you want to sell your house - question mark? Do you want to sell your house - question mark? Sell your house - question mark?

00:18:07

A few times we come home to handwritten notes tucked into the door handle, through the gate asking the same question. One day, we come home to a notice full of typos declaring new ownership of the house tacked to the back door, the front door and the window. We call an old friend. Is this a scam - question mark? Must be a scam. Two weeks ago this desk was the perfect vantage point for watching the water in my new street, fill up and drain, and then fill up again. I watched the water outside surrounded by boxes on the floor. No more dog walkers. On the news what to do about addicts and axes. We worry about our belongings, all strung out on the floor, as the no hype weatherman gets more hyped up. We hoist boxes up. Each hour as the rain falls, we hoist and unpack boxes. Uncover evidence of living and listen to the water. My brother WhatsApp me from Hong Kong. Are you okay - question mark? Are you okay - question mark? They have just survived a typhoon. We are lucky. I say, we are

00:19:14

still lucky. Those living underneath the old house, a mouthful of lizard, a cap of cockroach, a cut of mouse, an orchestra of cat. Gossip was a rotation of carnivore and plant crusher, an empty pot by the door. Many plants die upon contact. I can't keep them from wilting. One day a neighbor comes by, "Hey does Kate still own this house - question mark?" He asked looking at us. Later, I asked see if we look like a queer couple or some lesbians friends, or family - question mark? Do we look like we belong together? A gender ambiguous Asian-American and a white trans woman, sharing an old house - question mark? "Yes," we say. He points to a slouching tree ominously encroaching on our car, "Looks like it's going to fall." We thank him and he goes down the street again. The first day that we moved into the neighborhood, our almost neighbor had driven slowly by, high in his black truck told us that he had a relationship with the land next door and that he visited from time to time. I felt protected under his gaze,

00:20:19

almost comforted under his surveillance. The old house was a bit lonely, a bit creaky. When you are alone, you felt a spook. Across the street, another old house with a no-trespassing private property sign, but we never saw anybody go in or out. On the last night the only things left in the house were the clippings from my buzzed head and shrimp peels from a ransacked fridge. A stained mattress and

upended sofa slowly grew into a stack in the street across from our back door next to an orange hanging electrical wire. A short bearded man dragged more furniture out to the pile. We looked at each other accomplices in trash, neighbors in the night.

00:21:05

Thank you so much for being such a great listening ear, for my work and to honor Monica Roberts. I'm just going to finish with one last piece called, "Breath for Guan Yin." One. Brought to pond 10,000 steps a hum. Each cascade of yellow tile supported by sturdy red. One metal figure waiting on water to quiet mind's battle. Metallic rain horde means fill your bathtub, cook all food, no water in grocery store gas station line to empty. Crush of leftover white cardboard boxes, floorlength we unpack lift box higher. No bathing or showering. Do we have an axe - question mark? A tight set of drawers in lungs. Slow a breath for ritual smoke, open late door and friend a shoe on busy rack. Empty, enter already-breathing room. 100 golden figures sitting in perch, each sewn seat in neat place. Considering attic, a man walks in front of watching window. No shoes. We could second each foot slowly again, again. Floor it. A message says to knock on Airbnb door.

00:22:34

Two. Man or woman - question mark? Man or woman - question mark? No, other options at check-in. Ladies or jocks - question mark? No time for questions. 11 size sneakers, pair of grey shorts, woman's blouse, children's shoes what size - question mark? Line of eagers at distribution line all-day. Rice University students writing orders. Fill big blue bags. Sort through assembly walkers toothbrushes. Pillows, blankets hot commodity special line form to right. Don't you mister me! I see who wanted ladies shoes repeating request. I'm not a mister! I'm not a mister! And no response before turning away from line toward a line of beds. Volunteer supervisor no time for questions. I write on post-it note, "Please. No assumptions. Please. Respect please." No time for questions.

00:23:23

Three. Friend said all the aunties chanting brought me green. One sound, four meanings. I enter inflection meaning mother not horse. Meaning guide sits sings, lesson from diverging mouth. Chemical cloud pings pings a hot, rushing air. All bodies and yard humming in mind. Thick infection in head. Can't say I broke much trying not to ingest 10,000 hurricane microbes. Let go spider tendrils.

00:23:56

Four. At the lost and found eyeglasses, a credit card. Note left at desk because no cell phone. Woman in wheelchair checks in again about no cell phone. Cold boxed pizza. White-haired unshaven waded through waters wants help calling FEMA. From Louisiana to Katrina, lost bags. Maybe at last shelter, lost daughter or son back in LA. We roll through shelter names and phone number. I inhale smoke dial, disembodied numbers to receive. Heart knows how to attach, how to cling worthy ache, sister in empty seat, how to bring down rain. Why chant dead grandmothers into room. Animal set loose in chest. Only one of a believer and other a cook preparing food for hungry repentant.

00:24:50

Five. When street drains is there pressure in street. All notes escape injure to try not exhume breath from body. Walk away from dead night, throw arms to air, hoping for birds to land. Thank you.

00:25:12 Peggy

Thank you. What a beautiful tribute to your friend, Monica. Tell us her name again so we can read more about her.

00:25:20 Ching-In

Monica Roberts.

00:25:21 Peggy

Monica Roberts, thank you so much.

00:25:27

Our next reader is Maisha Banks Manson. Maisha is a Queer, gender non-conforming, Black identified artist, activist, teacher and writer. They have devoted their personal journey to self-healing through reclamation of personal history, knowledge and creating spaces for healing of others. Please welcome, Maisha.

00:25:57 Maisha

Hi friends. So glad to be here on Thursday evening as it gets closer and closer to, you know, really being fall. And I have to give up on my sunshine. Now we're going to go through a few things that fit the season. We talked about monsters in the beginning and I thought it would be fitting to keep that as a theme. And, then we'll end with a tarot reading.

00:26:33

This black boy knew, shine. Like you know how. Damn to bare me broken, tear you out of my lungs, this Black girl. Black girl is not used to being happy, so I wrap her affirmation and lullaby her gorgeous. Black girl is not used to being safe, so I shine her with lavender for warmth between her shoulders. Black girl is not used to being heard. So I map pleasure on my hand and teach her Braille. Black girl is not used to being loud. So I break her heavy, and she paints the walls with her screams. Black girl is not used to being alone. So I leave and leave and leave. Black girl screams on her own, safe on her own, heard on her own. And finally, loves. Leads for the first time for herself, and I will wait for the moon. She bleeds for the first time for herself. Black girl screams on her own, safe on her own, heard on her own, and finally loves. So I leave, and leave, and leave. Black girl is not used to being alone. So I break her heavy and she paints the walls with her screams. Black girl is not used

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to being loud. So I map pleasure on my hands and teach her Braille. Black girl is not used to being heard. So I shine her with lavender for warmth between her shoulders. Black girl is not used to being safe. So I wrap her affirmation and lullaby her gorgeous. Black girl is not used to being happy. This black girl tear you out of my lungs. Damn to bare me broken shine. But, this black boy knew.

00:28:17

I swallow creatures whole. Tail over tongue, claws gnarled and my throat scales engrained like lost lovers in my cheeks. My stutter be bloodstains. The way my mom taught me. The same way her mom taught. To hold breasts back behind trapped teeth. Silent choir, our song, black. Human whisper our dreams. Shout out, skin fire - dance till we bleed. The same way. This way. To hold our beast trapped behind teeth like silent choir song, swallowed.

00:29:02

So we had some fun with some monsters. I'm going to listen to a few poems about tarot cards and a tarot reading that I gift to y'all. This tarot reading uses three cards: one oracle card, two tarot cards, and then sort of wraps up those meanings to take with y'all.

00:29:30

The card - Boundaries. Celiac, Ablanca, AKA Willow. Bow. Steadfast. Eat the sun. Broken. Heavy hands, tired arms. The most beautiful burdens are carried in tired, heavy vows. Bow. Steadfast. Eat the sun. Broken. Heavy hands, tired arms carried in tired, heavy vows. The most beautiful burden.

00:30:13

For - The Lovers. I painted my lover's skin. Covered scars with water. Die poured into each myopic crevice. Let me cover her whole. So she resembled my favorite colors. Crawled into the back of my throat. Kicked out "I love you" in Morse Code on my voice box. This is how I know she never loved me. Paint is never supposed to dry quick, evaporate on tongue. I stopped painting. Picked up sculpting marble. Each chip you make more damage than the last. You polish if needed. Sometimes.

00:30:59

The Page of Wands. In reverse. There was a meteor chest - did you know? It's still on fire. Still leaving plumes of smoke and space in your wake. There's an asteroid sitting between your ribs, do you know? Wrapped inferno around your waist. Do you know there was a star in your height so bright it can't be helped, but noticed?

00:31:30

The message from your cards. How crystals are formed. Wrapped inferno, poured into each myopic crevice, the most beautiful burden. Gaze so holy they never leave this love. Salt, take hold of their strength, root in backbones. Drawn in isolation formed and can tangle and comfort. Tears find each other. Tingle and comfort, drawn in isolation, formed in kin. Salt takes hold of their strength, roots in backbone gaze. So holy, they never leave this love wrapped inferno. According to each myopic crevice, the most beautiful burden. Thank you so much. I hope you take all this well.

00:32:20 Peggy

Well, it said in the comments, you know, from Rob that, you know, he thought, Maisha was trying to murder us all. But other than that. [Laughter] Thank you.

00:32:28 Maisha

I was coming for you, Rob.

00:32:31 Peggy

You guys are all like, leaving us wanting more tonight. I should have told you, you had longer - my goodness. I forgot to mention earlier in the event that we generally have open mic in between, but since we had four readers tonight, I didn't know how it go. But we'll definitely have time if anybody would like to do a three-minute Open Mic after our final reader. Now, Jose Trejo-Maya has his camera isn't working tonight but we should be able to have, you know, we'll be able to listen with even more senses. And I've also asked him to do more of an introduction of himself, because despite coaching with my daughter in Mexico, today, I would absolutely butcher his amazing bio. Will say that before I turn it over to him that he is from, excuse me Jose Trejo-Maya has published in the UK, U.S., India, Spain, Australia, Argentina, Germany and Venezuela.

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He was a New Rivers Press Many Voices Project 2018 Finalist. And I will let him share with you the tradition from which he draws his work tonight. So, welcome Jose.

00:33:49 Jose

I guess I could start with my work. I guess my works came from dreams and I just talk about where I'm from, like what I've gone, like what I've seen from my experience. And a little bit as a background, I was born in Guanajuato in Mexico. And a lot of the where my work comes from is just like Mesoamerican lore, and like a pre-Columbian notion of time. So I always have those elements in my work. And the poems, I'm going to read they're from a manuscript that I wrote four or five years ago, and it's titled, "Deserts Sands." So my poems are really like, concrete, concrete poetry - like language poetry. So I'm going to read four or five and I can say that much. So I'll start.

00:34:54

Words lacerate silence. Nahuatl [NAHUATLACAH plural form of Nahuatl – speaking people. [Speaks in Spanish] Lightning in the braids this poetic stream. All I got is the ink to bleed. Like crows refract, black pearls glare, sheen and/or ruby-throated hummingbirds, razor-sharp flight - iridescent. Ghost haunt the plains. ITONAL-LI ' one's shadows, spirit, soul. Spirit helpers are the essence one breathes. TEZCATLIPOCA mirror smoking as writing this, blue lightning inside the temezcalli/inipi sweat lodge ceremony, NEXTLI ashes, cinders, ceniza' in the memories blare voices coalesce, rainbows of flowers, in how thoughts bright as sunrise burns nights stare. TLAHUIZCALPANTECUTLI [speaks in Spanish] Venus, first light of dawn breaks past the meridians. Shamans cross parallels, ethereal

00:36:20

[Feedback.] silex shards languages. We do not all see the same. [Speaks in multiple languages] Flower and song inscribed in the DNA. In the poolside eclipse these words here written, before the cursors and screens blurred peripheral incisions in the visual cortex. In three more words bring back ghosts, here hidden in I. That's the first poem and I have another one. This was titled, "Lightning in the Blood."

00:36:55

One. Look into the symmetry of I. Spider's webs, got you. Dreams flow, cutting edge moon. Bear constellation. Tlahuizcalpantecutli [speaks in Spanish] The trace serrate across crab nebula super nova to the equilibrium in the DNA and the 405 elements and spirits. Outside space/time continuum - like suns shine inside voices shard from sunstone calendars, ebb and glow in the mind stream. Words cut. I bleed this slowly moments seep away and the hour glass turn to stone, pyramids shift accelerate. In the memory's glare Uxmal seven temples lost in space, step forward a cymbal engraved by shield jaguar in Yaxchilan. Two eyes sheer words from another time lapse photographic in Balamcan. There are 365 steps and a serpentine light down the staircase in the solstice. Quetzalcoatl metamorphoses into Tezcatlipoca' sight, or thoughts struck from the jade. Immaterial ether, built on perception multisensory. Its chicnahui quiahuitl tititl yei acatl - or nine rain gathering three reeds in the Tonalpohualli

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carry it with in these words, fractured visual resonance invisible. I, or thoughts, lacerate time. Crossover meridians of light - like peach blossoms spring in winter snows. Tlatoani Cuauhtemoczin hologram here inscribed

00:38:56

that is suns crashed into rainbows. Like these, I thought experiments breathed into word, prayers. So the poetic keeps bleeding. In ceremony the silex soul shard into cloud cover, in the jade iris glare. Language is weaved in staeleae of memories repose. tijax in k'iche maya is the glyph for flint knife sharpened, obsidian eyes. Fires as embers splint into light, [Feedback, distorted sound]

00:39:38

Meteor showers, give, beam, refract in shaded ideas without time lapse, ideographic screens in concrete language. In the multidimensionality of worlds, lives, in these instances as stars implode. Gamma rays are lighting these x-rays scarred from ancestral DNA. I.

00:40:07

And I will read my last poem, as a little background, all my poems, are concrete poems, so that I have shapes in them. It's always best like when you can see them. And let me read the last one.

00:40:26

Transparent thoughts in the poolside eclipse, that's hard you see. When there's a language, but no one to speak it too. Nahuatlacah/Purepecha huchari uri picua –por nuestra Fuerza. Carry over sight how languages bleed in yellow spider suspended animation, adamantite steel. It's the child in me to breathe these images into three dimensions iris glare. Seventeenth cycle guards chicome acatl tititl nahui tecpatl, it's the period of repose. Betwixt visual cortex. Ixquimilli the dark eyed scribe hallowed cenotes carving Tezcatlipoca, read in the periphery. 1519 la noche triste pyramid glyphs bleed within this ain't an erased camera obscura, you can read behind these words isles. Desert sands inscribed in The DNA marred ethics shard jagged flint. Tears encoded, in the topography scarred with an

unbalanced cross, double helix three stripes on the right temple. Teardrops of the jaguar, how silence weighs. Heyokah - thunder dreamers breathed into the bloodstream. Eagle feathers breeze the melanin

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darkens blue lightning. Inipi, sweat lodge ceremony - spirits awaken the memory I, jade, glass. Slowly time engulfs stream of consciousness. Two braids in the above count reads seven reed period. Seclusion four silex. [Speaks in Spanish] And so it's like breathing and multiple dimensions. Suns refract rainbows kaleidoscope cast stars. Lobo Xocoyotlzin there are transparencies the minds I. Windstorms, lexicon of brawn, white lightning, how words immaterial lacerations in time. Step back and you will see a pyramid shift in the space-time continuum. Accelerate when you palm your hands. Organic poets, cut deep in the spirit essence, [speaks in Spanish] Owls refract jade screens in pitch dark forest, white, ochre shades of ceremonies embedded in winter frosts. Petroglyph origins of the carbon - 14 frames. Dreams serrated from orography and winds fissures, I. It's a soliloquy that you are reading - stone words cut underworld corridors in Tonina. Besides you see invisible jaguar warrior. Open Scrolls. Chicuey Ocelotl Tititl Nahui Tecpatl. And that's the last poem. I think that was the end of it.

00:43:40 Peggy

[Laughter]Thank you. You know, one of the wonderful things actually about this format with Zoom, is that like people immediately like especially Rob whose fast take words from you and like, share it. And so I was busy writing it down by hand and we both caught on, "the meridians of light, like peach blossoms in spring in winter snow." Beautiful. So, all right, well, it's now open up for if anyone would like to, I'm going to put it in the gallery view. If anyone, you know, now wishes that they had, it would read one more poem any of our writers tonight or any of our audience members, I welcome you to be part of Open Mic. So just give me a wave or a chitchat. You never know, it kind of goes from month to month, but it's wonderful to have so many new names and faces here tonight. I hope that if this is your first time visiting the, It's About Time Writers' Reading series because of, you know, coming in through the Jack Straw writers, I hope that, if you're a writer yourself,

00:45:02

you will feel free to contact me, which I'm at Peggy.Sturdivant@gmail.com, I'm continually looking to set up readings, every second Thursday of the month for new and experienced writers and it's always been one of the most welcoming venues - no matter where we're located for people, no matter where they are in the spectrum - in terms of where they've ever read before, or whether experienced readers. And it just be delightful to have you spread the word and have you come back. So Michael,

00:45:44 Michael

Hi. And thanks. Rob for nudging me here, I was just going to be a happy audience member. I was just basking in all of the amazing poems that you all shared, but I can't turn down Rob. So this is a poem of mine called, "When the River at Last has Fled its Bed." We parse the difference between jealousy and envy and carry curved sticks pointing nowhere. Unlike water, we wander beyond banks, the damaged world seeps, corrodes battery terminals, collect cans, far below and bent the canyons.

And, as meanings go - was never meant for this. Salvation, through guilt. If it can burn, it has been burning, this is the nature of fuel, which is only ever one thing until it breaks into heat, into light. Thank you.

00:46:47 Peggy

Thank you so much. So in the meantime, Rob have, you know, have you nudged anyone else? You just going to work your way through?

00:46:54 Rob

I was trying to nudge people.

00:46:57 Audience member

I'll go - I'll read something. So I've been signed up for a class with Sierra Nelson at Hugo House, and it's been super wonderful. We're reading *Madness, Rack and Honey* by Mary Ruefle, and there's a section on sentimentality - and our assignment, one of them was: don't be less of a flower, but be more of a flower but also a stone. And I thought, okay, what sentimental a phone call, right? So this poem is called, "Voice of the Beloved." A woman was jailed in the Netherlands for calling a man 65 thousand times in a year. An average of 180 times a day, which is 7 times an hour. They found eight cell phones in her home with only his number there in. They let her out

00:47:46

on bail, but as soon as she was free, she started calling him again. What happened in her head? What important thing did she need to say? Was she trying - trying to drive him insane? As insane as he had driven her? Or, did she merely need the sound of his voice to touch the tiny bones of her ears? The cadence and timbre of his hello?

00:48:11 Peggy

More? Now, just the one?

00:48:15 Audience member

Oh yeah, just the one for now. You all sounded so great. It was, I'm really happy I got to tune in, and I sign up to tune in to these things and then I forget, so I'm glad I was here tonight.

00:48:28 Peggy

It's lovely to see you again. Come back anytime. Okay. Calling any other Open Mic readers...

00:48:40 Rob

So I have -so as a little treat for those who stayed on a little bit longer - do you mind, do you want me to read one, sort of very new poem - totally unworkshopped, and brand-new? And this is a fun poem because it's yeah, new shit. This is a fun poem because it's I was talking to a friend and saying how I edit moons out of poems. And because it's like a danger in lyric poetry. And then I decided instead to just write an entire moon-full poem. So this is this is a moon-full poem. It's called, "All the Moons I've Cut from Poems."

00:49:30

All the moons I've cut from poems, I placed them here - for you. The moon, which is a rock peeled from another, in the miasma of creation. In different moon, lofting above, as flames clung to the monk's body. As men in a fury of belief beheaded the journalist. The moon, which is also that head. Those dead, sunken eyes, staring down all night. The maybe moon, which is not a moon, but a street lamp, the street lamp which is not a lamp, but the moon lighting a concrete expanse. A, pixelated moon, shrunken moon that lovers might gift one another. Which is also the moon of this rat cratered on the sidewalk. The moon of garbage strewn in the Chinatown shrubbery, of the men nodding out on their stoops and trolley stops, of the pockmarked boy inserting, so tenderly, the needle into his girlfriend's neck. Which is to say the moon of my neighborhood, the redlined moon, the gentrified moon. The moon that watched over genocides, mass murders. Or this very moon tonight which like a twin sister stillborn

00:50:56

haunts, the sky ex-utero as a spider might stride her web. This venomous moon, abdomen moon. And yes, this is also, the lyric moon, the moon made of charred remains of every poet, whose body is compressed into shards of lights in the memories, in the mouths we long for on lonesome nights, when the earth enshrouds the moon. When we stand at the water's edge to feel, its hidden bulk tugging at the break wall. Our bodies pulled to the sea, as the sea is pulled to the moon, and the moon to the earth, and so on to the great cosmic helter-skelter that we skid through. And perfect lives lit by imperfect light, refracting through the emptiness, as vast as the void of death. And just now, the moon you send me, moon-faced young singer on the grainy black-and-white video. His smooth swagger, lip-synced lyrics, his impassioned arpeggiated woes, that longing beyond words, beyond - honest you do, honest you do. Seven years later he'd be murdered by the night manager of a Los Angeles motel. The baby bump, half-moon

00:52:18

waxing his own words back, as moon shaped the blood pooled. It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die because I don't know what's up there beyond the sky. Beyond the sky is more sky, leaking steadily into the vacuum of space. Beyond the sky is the infinite night. Infinity is of stars and their moons, each of them silent, each of them waiting for this blip of existence to unravel, or maybe each inhabited by souls of the dead and gone. The travesties and the forgotten, their great loves for one another - which it felt so real, so blessed, so validated by this ancient, skeletal light of the moon. So there's a fun moon poem, I mean a dark moon poem for everybody.

00:53:12 Peggy

Wow, that was quite a bonus we got. I'm, I'm so glad we decided to do this like run through again. So I'll forgo the full bios. But, Ching-In would you like to read as well, next? Or, you know or at least a poem, whatever you want to read. [Laughter] Or, it was kind of like - the idea was like there was a couple people who came in late, who said -yeah, you guys should all do the whole thing again.

00:53:44 Ching-In

Okay, I'll look for another poem something that I didn't already read.

00:53:49 Peggy

Okay.

00:53:50 Ching-In

But, I don't know what that is right now. So if the others want to read and maybe you can come back to me?

00:53:58 Peggy

Okay, Maisha, how about you?

00:54:03 Maisha

From the audience in my, in the other room, I heard - poem, poem, poem. To keep with spooky moon themes, and monster moon things and continual monster themes of our decided readings. "A Poem for Missy Elliott."

00:54:28

Take my thong off, and my tail go, boom. To feel more connected in bed. Notice the sound of a steady heart. Remember, like it's the last. He wants to initiate sometimes. Which means he wants you to take charge. Flash a smile, bare your teeth. Take time to breathe in his cologne. Flare your nostrils. Follow the scent. Wear lingerie, let your feathers unfurl down your spine, and flutter black. Use a gentle touch. Flash painted talons, whisper. Break the hinges on your jaw and roar. Breathe in cologne. Flare your nostrils. Don't close your eyes. Wait, for the moment when the whites of his look like yours, since he called you wild anyways. Bury your prey in the same place you put all your bones. Be a beast, like the animal, you are.

00:55:31 Peggy

I'm enjoying this - this kind of more freewheeling approach to tonight. That's kind of inspired. Ching-In, did you find another poem?

00:55:43 Ching-In

Okay, this is random. I just opened a random Word Doc. So, so this is your random bonus. House. The story began with a barrage of strangers. Their words, shoved into the door. The story begins with a half abandoned house with a paint job that the German caretaker casually remarked - done by local crackheads. It began with the housing crisis, a city raising down its affordable housing, a corporate hiring boom. The boom and bust of oil money. It began with a little sparks of community history. A house passed down from artist to artist. Each, an imprint in the house. A house full of holes, never able to keep out the wizard, the cockroach, the ant and the rat. A house with a ghost sibling, whose relatives showed up to watch, to mourn, to gather. It began with the letter taped to the door by the sheriff. It began with 48 hours. 48 hours and counting.

00:56:37

How many letters could we tape on boxes - question mark? How many strangers in the city with no family could be asked - question mark? How many rooms could be emptied in how many minutes - question mark? A house full of sparks gathering in the doorway. A house of friendly strangers, wrapping up one life, to ship to another. How could it end - question mark? The dream of small dwelling opening up to tree and bloom. Opening up to many hands to make the meal. That's it - small bonus.

00:57:08 Peggy

[Laughter] More than a small bonus. I love your use of question mark. I've never heard anybody do that quite before. Okay. How about you, Jose - would you like to do a bonus? He's been invisible to us anyway, so I don't know, he's able to like hear or see. So, unless I hear from maybe I should cut my, cut my losses, tonight.

00:57:35 Maisha

Maybe Jose is omnipresent, you know, just forever and always with us.

00:57:40 Peggy

Yes, you're right, you're right. So, anyway, we actually had kind of a great showing. We, this is like better than when people used to come to the library and like when leave, they'd always think that it would be better, not to like shut the door. And so then we'd somebody would have to get up and shut the door - so we even held onto much more of an audience. And that is for those who stayed what a bonus it's been tonight. So I would like to thank everyone who is here tonight and like I said, come back, visit other times and let me know, you know, invite your friends. Tell us about It's About Time. It's always the second Thursday and we're always welcome. We like to lure people in, and you know, sometimes we get them on the 3-minute open mic. And next thing, you know, we got them as a featured reader. So thank you - mark, your calendars for I'm peering over. It will be after the election. We next will be gathering on November 12th with Donna Miscolta, Claudia Castro Luna and Marie Catalina Cantú. Which should be a wonderful evening. Thank you, good night.