



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series: Meeting 378

00:00:01 Peggy

Good evening, and welcome to reading number 378 of the it's about time writers reading series. We have a fantastic lineup tonight, people reuniting throughout the city, and in their little Zoom boxes. We're going to be welcoming E. Lily Yu, Allison Green, and Sylvia Byrne Pollack. I've also just recently learned that Sylvia, which I'll read in her bio, is nominated for an Aspiring Senior Award by Sound Generations, which I think is wonderful, but I have another friend who's been nominated who's the same age as me. So...

00:00:45 Peggy

So tonight we have two open mic people so far, Carol Holding and Brett Bowman. I believe last name is Bowman, if you want to do a three minute reading, just let me know this. Reading is being recorded the library after its recorded we will be excerpting it by reader. Depending on who wants to participate and also any names that are showing the Librarians who have their wonderful genius ways, will erase any names so that privacy be will be maintained for all of our attendees. I don't think I have any other notes for you tonight. Just welcome to a beautiful evening in May, May 13th and let's just jump right in there. I have not had the pleasure until tonight of meeting E. Lily Yu. So, it is absolutely a pleasure to meet her and see her reconnect with many of her writing friends as well. She is the author of the novel *On Fragile Waves*, published in February 2021, which received starred reviews from Publishers Weekly, Booklist, LibraryJournal, and Foreword Reviews. She received the Artist Trust LaSalle Storyteller Award in 2017 and the Astounding Award for Best New Writer in 2012 and has been a finalist for the Hugo, Nebula, Locus, Sturgeon, and World Fantasy Awards. More than thirty short stories have appeared in venues from McSweeney's to Boston Review to Tor.com, as well as twelve best-of-the-year anthologies.

00:02:42 Peggy

Welcome Lily.

00:02:45 Lily

Thank you so much for having me. I want to call out Allison Green, Jennifer Monroe, and Don Imus Colton, audiences as part of my writing group, who saw the real early drafts of this book and help make it better. If anyone picks up the New York Times Sunday review this weekend, the New York Times book review does have a very short review of this and they call it perfect and devastating

which is, I hope it lives up to the hype. So I'll be reading from this book. Book, the first three chapters. And here is chapter one. [Reading] "[Overlapping sounds] Once there was, once there was a daughter [overlapping sounds]

00:03:40 Lily

This is during war when time is no time at all. And everything must be said in the breath between mortar. [overlapping sounds].

00:03:57 Lily

We will call her Furisae, her father, said, slapping her back until she purpled and wailed, because she will either be a rock or victorious. And besides a name is cheaper than a sword. Her first word was Gola. I ask you, what is the difference between war and not war? When there is no music. Two years later came Nor, slick and shiny in a long, unsatisfied scream, and everyone was hungrier. When Furisae was six, fire fell again from the sky. [Noises] A city of smoke pitched its tents over Kabul a long loud time America on every lip. Then Abay turned on the radio and on the fragile waves, they heard Adam Bora strumming a milk and sugar song. It's over. Thank God said Atay and went to work. Chapter 2. Listen said Abay, bring me your clothes to pack and I will tell you the story of rustam and rosh. At least sit still Nor and don't tear down laundry. At least sit, Nor please rustam was rash and brave like you light of my eyes. And when the time came to find him a steed, every horse

00:05:20 Lily

buckled under his warriors weight. So they ran the best horses of Kabul passed him. The swiftest and most beautiful, and just like your Atay feels the engine of a Corolla throbbing through the hood and knows how well it runs. You could feel the proud heart be of these horses. God knows stabling horses wasn't a dangerous job then. No one threatened the Kabuli stable keepers, who paraded their horses for this Prince. We should have stayed servants but your father is proud. Anyhow. Rustam cut from the heard, a beautiful cult spotted like rose petals on saffron. Like the silk flowers from Chicken Street on a wedding taxi. He tossed his lasso around its neck and asked the price of the horse. If you Rustam, said the herdsman, it's price is nothing less than this country. Go forth and defend it. So Rustam traveled fourth seeking adventure. As we are all about to do and Rash kept Rustam safe as your Atay and I will keep you safe. Rash guarded Rustam while he slept first.

00:06:26 Lily

He killed a lion that crept up in the night. In the morning rustam discovered shreds of lying in his horses teeth, and on his horses hooves, then Rustam kicked Rash awake when a dragon approached. Once twice, both times were stomps on nothing. He threatened to kill the useless, son of a donkey. If he was woken up. Again, the third time, rustam saw the dragon and slew it and praise Rash. How he praised him light of my eyes. Deeply did Rustam love Rash as much as a mother loves her son. They rode together for many years and countless far song Until treachery, but that is another story. We will ride a bus to jalalabad. Tonight, just as rustam Road, Rash to challenge the white Steve in jalalabad, we will change buses. The way Persian Warriors changed horses and ride to Pakistan. It will be like a story. I needed to be good. I need you to be quiet. I need you to not pull fears as hair.

Nor I passed her Quran over you, so you are blessed. Kiss it now, you know, it will stay here to protect

00:07:35 Lily

our home while we are gone. Put on your shoes.

00:07:41 Lily

Chapter 3, The ripped vinyl of the seat caught Furisae's skirt as she shifted to peek out of the Mini Bus window. Nor's elbow dug into her side. Atay. Are we in Pakistan yet? Not yet, Nor how much longer a little while. You said that when we were on the bus, it's still true. Don't kick you. Like the plush German bus, didn't you? And the Trucks that bumped up and down but had beautiful eyes on their back Gates and flowers and lions on their sides. Yes. How big I didn't they hurt my bum? Furisae has more bum. That's why hers doesn't hurt. I like the Sheep on the truck, it was soft. This one's too crowded. Everyone smells. You smell Nor. Just a little longer Nor. June a few more minutes and we'll be at the border. Will there be police? Say enough? I need to remember four hundred things today. Ask your mother. Will the police stop us, Abay? What a question are we going to get in trouble? Do you want to know something for a few of our knees? You can cross the border into Pakistan and hindered?

00:08:54 Lily

That is how day workers flow in and out with a little more money in their pockets, the tide of adventurers, that's what we are flows in and does not return. It is not dangerous at all. If you're is a not like what [unknown] had to do, what did [unknown] have to do, she had to win back. Her husband caustic home are from a demoness and stay alive. And did she? If you're going to tell stories in front of everyone, they rubbed his eyes. At least do it properly, from the beginning, the snake. All right. One day among days, a Woodcutter found a snake in his bundle thick as your, I tase arm, he almost died of fear right there but the snake said I will not harm you. If you marry me to your daughter, [unknown] was a brave girl and agreed on their wedding night. When the guests were gone, the snake flung off his And became a beautiful young man, plastic home are and they lived very happily together. But the woman had to gossip and say, idle foolish things at a side. Isn't that always? So obvious

00:10:05 Lily

said if fear is a married, a snake who was also a man, wouldn't you try to make him listening and more man, if that snake had tried this nonsense with my daughter, I'd have beaten him to death or taken her and fled the country hobby. Is that why we had to leave? Listen to the snoring. Listen to the story, nor fear is a eats too much and won't. Let me win at walnuts who want her? Why not asking how to destroy his skin? Beeping two cars mother said to make him stay. So [unknown] asked us take home our and he said if you must know you can burn it in a fire of onion skins and garlic pills. But if you do that, I will leave you forever and be being a guard told her mother all this. That old woman, probably wept, wrung her hands, tore her hair, said shame. And all those things that mothers-in-law do, of course, that silly girl bent under all that pressure. Of course, the skin was

burned. Did you want to tell the story husband? Please go on. Kostik home are smelled the smoke from afar and knew what had

00:11:13 Lily

happened. He came to his wife and said so you've done it now. I must leave you. She wept and said is there no other way and [unknown] said only if you walk until you wear out, seven pairs of iron shoes to reach [unknown] where my relatives the Perry's live which is where I am going. So be [unknown], they're asleep. No, I'm not. You say this. Man is trustworthy

00:11:45 Lily

as trustworthy as any of them, he's gotten six men to Australia. Where's Australia? I don't know, but it's safe. He says to the children will go to good schools. No one will attack me in the street or leave threatening letters, or insult. You the right question to ask a Smuggler like that. One of the other passengers interjected is how many men did he fail to get to Australia?

00:12:14 Lily

I did not ask him that then God help you. You speak from experience. I had a herati cousin headed to Germany through Iran. Haven't heard from him in months. They found some boys dead in a cargo container but he wasn't among them. The smuggler has left [unknown] for who knows where and you you have a wife and children quiet. Please don't make them. They don't need to be frightened. How else do children? Learn fear is a cracked, her eyes open in front of her wedged, among tightly corded bundles a g'kar suede in its wire cage staring. It's black people ringed in brown than red destined for battle, the claw and draw blood, and finally be eaten. Now, and then a jolt to the minibus knocked a querulous note from its throat and she and she was rustam on his speckled steed writing into known lands was [unknown] in iron shoes gone to mount cough where wonders were was as disobedient as snake shoulder and sahak when she pinched her brother and made him. Well or so Abay often said. Goodbye to [unknown]

00:13:26 Lily

Goodbye to [unknown]. Goodbye to the dry. Sweet smell of the classroom where she learned her lessons, with a hairy teacher always called on someone else. Never mind that Furisea leaned, almost on tiptoe, from her desk, vibrating with answers, goodbye to home. And the creaking clanging front gate and the steaming that's a breakfast pulses by the road and the men sitting in wheelbarrows, waiting for work, goodbye to the mountains sharp with snow He gestured toward the stranger Annika. Do you know how much longer only an hour or so, to the Border? Where are you going? [unknown]. Where in [unknown]? I don't know. I have a name, a phone number. Fool, the stranger said amiably, a name and a phone number. A name and a phone number. All the way to Australia. Is that how you'll go God protect you? They said, my husband is no fool. A long, sad look then the stranger proffered a pocket full of dried mulberries for the children. He said and turned to face the front and from then until [unknown]

00:14:39 Lily

he did not speak again." Thank you.

00:14:44 Peggy

Thank you so much. We would have wanted you to keep going. Just wanted to listen to your voice all night. I was so struck by the line, if you're going to tell stories, at least do it properly. And not only do you tell a beautiful story but you read it and perform it beautifully. Thank you.

00:15:10 Peggy

I'm now going to go to Carol holding for our first open mic tonight. Followed by Brett. So if Carol is ready to, yes, she's unmuted. Okay, Carol holding three minute open mic.

00:15:28 Carol

Thanks Peggy. Wonderful reading Lily, I'm completely intimidated. This is also the start of a book of my novel, which I have read this. I think this is a third version for this group, so I appreciate your patience. The book will be called something but something around the Great Recession, a love story. [Reading] "December 18, 2008 lunch at the Harvard Business School's Executive Dining Room, on the middle floor of a three-story brick structure built around a courtyard. The room is nearly empty Christmas break and smells of fresh dinner rolls and moldering plasterboard. We are for for lunch. Me, + David Melnick, my would be partner. If we get the project, Julia Jordan, the Chic middle-aged African-American. Runs our alumni office, and the young woman whose name I missed. As we walk towards our table I comment on the black birds

00:16:20 Carol

floating in and out of the windows that they look like an exhibit in a natural history museum. David has been briefed me on the scheme where there to discuss I am there to sell myself to Julia Jordan. David is close to Julia though. Not to the 20-something subordinate. She brought along. This is Junior's first visit to the inner sanctum of capitalism and David's to and they are impressed, despite its unremarkable, architecture and furniture. We're seated at a window. I'm facing it Julia. Jordan takes a breadstick. Freeing me to do the same. I asked if I can take notes, but she said, she'd prefer that I not, let's just get to know each other. She says, looking pointedly at Junior. She and David began talking about a volunteer project at the New York Alumni club a club Hubbard's breaks off, and then disappears on the rest follow, then they reappear this time in loose formation is if they're an art, installation, Aviary forms connected by Loose firewires. I turned my attention back to the

00:17:18 Carol

meeting. David's voice has dropped to an intimate purring. He with his trust were the veneer a solid square face and thick, blonde curls and Julia smiling. Snuggly are huddled together, so that neither, I nor the junior client can hear what they're saying. She's a newly-minted career woman in a cheap black suit a girl on the go. She looks at me and patiently David and Julia turned towards me in tandem. David says Elizabeth's work focuses on environmental branding. But as you saw from the conference, she's also an expert in nonprofits. Just consulted on the 9/11 Memorial, I smile and not a Julia. I finished that project, three years ago but I need this business badly. I'll be whatever whatever he wants to sell me as nobody has paying work. It's the depths of the Great Recession, like most of

New York, I'm desperate. Our lunch has arrived. The birds are black to fly back to flying across the courtyard information now, and then flashing me with her, white bellies ice map smile, at their limited

00:18:20 Carol

repertoire and take a bite of my poached salmon and then the birds are gone. David and Julie are speaking informal business tones. The junior client asks what she thinks are. Smart deep questions. God save me from The Young and ambitious. In a Flash, the window fills with a body of birds, all tilted in unison. So they're white timet Tommy's glitter in the sun, I can hear them through the glass, the sound of wings flapping and insistent murmuring, they're flying much faster. Now sweeping across the yard in a single movement than turning on their backs, white chest to the sky and synchronized waves as they slow then dive out of sight. I wait transfixed for their next move. Nothing nothing and then they fly straight up again this time. So close to the window, I clap my It's involuntary, but it is also very rude. Sorry, I say meekly. Those birds are amazing. The three of them stare at me, horrified, Elizabeth David is embarrassed, Julia, Jordan says, I guess the birds. They leave a mess in

00:19:22 Carol

the courtyard but we can't get rid of them. There is a time-is-money edge to her voice because because for all of us, then everything's about money, and that's becoming a problem for me."

00:19:35 Peggy

Thank you, Carol.

00:19:37 Carol

Thank you for allowing me to read.

00:19:40 Peggy

I'm glad to see you again. Okay Brett.

00:19:46 Brett

Okay this is called Wild Horse, Look Out. [Reading] "June. A red Willys Jeep sputtering, spewing visitors and manicured clothing trampling up the rickety steps. I count each one until they and to my isolation babbling, nervous conversation as if it were a gift blinking, It Wide son, Lance landscape and arched, as or Sky till finally shyly inevitably. Don't you ever get lonely up here. Forget pretending sagacity. I answer. No, not really July bursting from my glass-walled cocoon to run the roads and eat wild berries Gathering foxglove Iris and Columbine walking with Nighthawks overhead circling and circling cougar watches with slit eyed anger from his white and Spruce snag perch August the final blood-red pangs of dying.

00:20:52 Brett

Some bull elk, horns lit up, like bone, white beacons. I sleep with a battalion of comrades. Cassiopeia Orion Buddhist Scorpio Aires. Cool and aloof. They're busy comings and goings cross the Zenith September Summers finale, winter rains, brooding on the darkened, Horizon Chiquita, a yellow Chevy loaded down. Ready. We three tumble, we three rumbled downwards towards city lights. Cat digging

claws in Angora's shoulders. Dog scanning for last glimpses of do and bow arm. You Mutual, trepidation and avidity for seven civilization, a small trail of dust Rises up in the empty road behind us. I have one more I can do with ink. Affliction of Addiction. Pre-election on my dark tail. Swish swish the sound it makes is they walk across the floor. Some sudden, it hits the pain as they moving through the door, what is that? I ask and stay. So close behind that no matter where I look. I cannot seem to find its part of me. I realized, as I wrap it around my chest, I squeeze it ever tighter as a curls around

00:22:16 Brett

my breasts. I see the pointed tip of it. Now, close up to my face. I wonder if this means that I'm no longer of a human. It binds my arms so close and holds them rigid as with fear it. Grabs my loved ones also and anyone who dares come here too late too late to pull away, it eats awareness from my head. It's inches tight around us both and leaves us both for dead but this time we've affected a close and harrowing escape, our bodies covered with the scars where the scales did roughly scrape, but the vision of its clutching coil still strike. It's terror in my heart. It makes the air seemed sweeter and life seemed more like art. But when I walk across the floor, I listened for the sound of my dark tale being dragged behind and beginning to curl around." That's it.

00:23:10 Peggy

Thank you Brett. It's nice to meet you. Come back and join us anytime. So now I'm moving on, and if you're just joining us, this is we number 378 at the it's about time writers, the series, we're now going to be hearing from Allison

00:23:28 Peggy

Green. Go ahead and unmute. Allison Green's first book, the novel Half-Moon Scar, was published by St. Martin's Press as part of its Stonewall Inn Editions imprint. Ooligan Press at Portland State University published her memoir, The Ghosts Who Travel with Me. Her essays, stories, and poems have appeared in publications such as The Gettysburg Review, ZYZZYVA, Calyx, Willow Springs, Raven Chronicles, and Yes! Magazine. She is working on a novel about the Mount St. Helens eruption. And as I've let her know, personally, I've never forgotten her reading with the assistance of Jennifer D, Monroe about the Equal Rights Amendment. Welcome Allison.

00:24:30 Allison

Thank you, thank you Peggy, and thanks, all of you and I have never read over Zoom. I've taught over Zoom but never read. So I hope this goes all right, I had planned to read from my manuscript about Mount st. Helens eruption. But my father died a week ago, and I wanted to read from

00:24:49 Allison

my Memoir a couple of pieces about him. And I think I can. I practice enough? I think I can get through them. So this is Memoir, The Ghosts Who Travel with Me. And so I'll just read three short pieces from the book. And after this one, I'll explain a little more about about how the book works. So, this chapter is called on the road in 1963. [Reading] "My parents were in graduate school in Ohio. When I was born, actually, my father was in graduate school and my mother had decided not to go back after her first year, now, that she had this Wiggly complain. Anything. That was me. She ate a lot

of cucumbers that summer. I was born maybe gas, explain my wiggling in August. My dad waved goodbye to my mother and two month old me as he drove away with a friend in a 49 Ford, Washington or bust sign across the back, he was one of the 300,000 people listening to Martin Luther King jr. Give the speech that would become the most famous in US history, according to the First, there's a lot of things. High school students,

00:26:01 Allison

don't know, but the I Have a Dream speech is one. They do. I have heard this story. Many, many times I hold it like a lucky stone in my pocket a Talisman against indifference in 1987 I went to my own March on Washington. This time with half a million people who are here, queer and fabulous, get used to it Marching for rights with that. Many people like yourself feels like Fourth of July fireworks and New Year's Eve champagne all-in-one holiday recently, my parents told me a story I hadn't heard before a couple of weeks after my father returned to Ohio and told my mother. What had happened on the mall in Washington, they got into the 49 Ford and drove to Alabama. They had never been to the South. My mother's sister was living in Montgomery, with my uncle who worked at the Air Force Base. In Birmingham, they stopped for lunch And shut a diner. The diner's radio was broadcasting the story of a bombing of a Baptist Church right there in Birmingham. Just a couple of hours before for black Sunday

00:27:10 Allison

school girls had been killed. I heard about this event, which would come to epitomize the cruelty of racist Southerners as I grew up, but I didn't realize how close I had been in space and time to the devastated Church in the diner. My dad looked out the window at the 49 Ford with the out-of-state plates. He looked at himself and his wife and his baby Southern whites were sometimes suspicious of whites from out of state. Assuming they were there to agitate for the rights of blacks. We're not eating here. He said and he hustled my mom out of the diner and back into the car and they were on the road hungry and sweating. He's intersections of the historic in the mundane, a racist bombing and a stop for lunch, a diaper change. You know. Hi. Oh and a March in Washington. Are they significant? Does it matter how close I came to hearing King's words myself. Does it matter that I was born in 1963? I think it does. I think it matters more than almost anything." So this is a book. It started with writing

00:28:23 Allison

about my adolescent obsession with the writer, Richard brautigan, who's famous for a book, while many books. But trout fishing in America was one of his famous books and in that book was based on a trip that he and his wife took through Idaho in the early 60s and my paternal grandparents are from Idaho. So my spouse Arlene and I followed in brought against footsteps through Idaho and I so the Memoir became a book about on literary ancestry and with an emphasis on this idea of who, what does it mean to be born in a time? And a place in a bit in a body. So that's those are the things I'm exploring. So I'm going to read another short passage of chapter called on the lam in Newport, Washington. [Reading] "My favorite Beatle was George. The quiet soulful one. I wanted to marry him, but he was already married to a waifish blond later. Singers like Joni Mitchell. Showed me that. I

could be a musician. Not just marry one, but musicians were not. The only women in popular culture to capture my attention,

00:29:33 Allison

one woman's image was all over our black-and-white televisions in the mid 70s. She was out there in America somewhere, and she was very dangerous. We bought groceries in the Small Town of Newport. When we stayed at my grandparents, cabin in Eastern Washington. The trip to Newport was an afternoon's entertainment. When we felt like going somewhere. One day, I exchanged, my swimsuit for sherbet, orange, top and shorts. Sewn by my grandmother and worked my toes into rubber thongs for a trip to Newport with my Dad. We went to the paperback book exchange where I traded Agatha Christie's two for one. We ate lunch at the diner. We always called no shoes. No. Shirts. After the misspelling that had been posted on the door one year, while we ate our grilled cheese. We wrote funny, postcards to my dad's parents after lunch, we went to the post office wanted signs hung on a bulletin board scruffy-looking men who killed police and robbed banks, and there was the woman Patty Hearst. The picture of Patty

00:30:39 Allison

Hearst in my head was the one at the bank where she wore a trenchcoat and hefted a machine gun. Patty Hearst. The terrorists but in the picture on the wanted poster, she smiled. The newspaper heiress the new stories that tracked, her movements told a strangely compelling story culpable but not dangerous but only if pushed I said, Patty Hearst wouldn't be a new report. What do they have signs for her in the Newport Coast office? My dad lick stamps and stuff them to the postcards Newport is exactly the kind of place Patty. Hearst my pee and maybe she was. Maybe I'd seen her buying a pound of Brock's candy at the Safeway or paging through. And then there were none at the Book Exchange must be boring on the lam sometimes. We mailed the postcards got into the Valiant and drove through town Patty. Hearst was sitting in the window of no shoes, no shirts drinking coffee over last week's, Newport Gazette."

00:31:42 Allison

So this is, I'm going to read another short chapter. [Reading] "my father was an anthropologist who taught at the University of Washington and he was, they called him Dr. Death because he taught a very popular course on death and dying. So this talk this chapter talks about that. I'm cool. Summer mornings. I would sit on a stool in my paternal, grandmother's Kitchen and eat stood plums while she made pancake rabbits in the afternoons. She played nursery rhymes on a baby grand piano. And my grandfather recorded me on his reel-to-reel singing along. When I was a teenager, my grandmother took me to the Opera and for my high school graduation. We went to a season of plays, the school for wives, and taken e, and the rose tattoo. The Idaho Farm girl had been eclipsed by the Seattle Opera guild member and Ikebana Club president XI. And my grandfather traveled to Europe, Mexico and Japan. She collected dozens of silver bracelets and they jangled against each other up and down her arms. It used to be that

00:32:50 Allison

when Arlene joked that I was from Idaho. She wanted me to acknowledge my Idaho Heritage by which she meant not the baby grand piano and the Tales of Hoffman. But the dusty Ranch where my grandmother grew up, Up. And the mining claims that my grandfather fruitlessly searched with his father and brothers. But now that we have spent some time in the state, her words have a different meaning to be from Idaho, is to be from the lakes of Stanley Basin. The leafy trees of Boise. The sweet quiet wins over the Cambridge Prairie. It's to be from the hipped up, Modern Hotel. With its mid-century Swagger from the restaurants of The Basque block from the long, cool Boise River. I Carry my grandmother's home. As I carry her bones, the shape of her body. The early silver gray of her hair in her casket. She wore the bracelets but before she was buried, they were slipped into a blue felt pouch and given to me every time I wear them. I feel the weight of that ancestry the same year Arlene. And I went to

00:33:53 Allison

Idaho, my father's book beyond a good death, the anthropology of modern dying was published after we returned from our trip. I sat down and read it. My mind, flickered with images from the trip, on my body, still carried the rhythm of travel, something had important had happened to me in Idaho but I couldn't articulate what it was in the book. My father wrote about our tendency in the United States, unlike in some other parts of the world to segregate the sacred from the mundane, we think of the spiritual plane as Beyond us up there in the sky or even farther out there in the universe. This is true. For those with a more traditional view of heaven and for those who sensed a diffuse Cosmic connection, but don't call it God. However, according to scholar, Robert, A or C. And here, I'm paraphrasing. My father's paraphrase. Our experience of the spiritual is always mediated through the material. We sense the presence of a dead relative as a shimmer in our bodies, or we swell with Celestial

00:34:58 Allison

well-being, while listening to a beautiful piece of music Religion or C says, is the practice of making the invisible visible of concretizing. The order of the universe, in other words, the only way we can understand, life's mysteries is through the physical world. We make pictures of God. We speak in tongues, we hear voices from Beyond we talk to our ancestors. Religion is the act of transforming abstract Mysteries into material realities. This definition of religion cracked open something inside me. I don't go to church on Sunday or imagine an afterlife. I'm pretty. Certain that when I take my last breath, whatever it is. That makes me me will dissipate and that my life has no particular meaning except that I like living it but or sees definition suggest that I've been religious all along when I wear the silver bracelets that clanked when my paternal grandmother came into the room, I am Munich ating with the dead. When I fill my maternal. Grandmother's milk glass, chicken, with pink and

00:36:05 Allison

white Mintz like she did. I am honoring the dead horse. He calls these manifestations of the world beyond the material bearers of sacred presence reading. My dad's book made me realize that I respond deeply to certain objects and not only to those associated with my biological ancestors. My pink paperback copy of trout fishing in America is a Bearer of sacred presence and I invest it with a meaning that is beyond its material reality. It is the wafer of my communion on that, beautiful day, in

September when Arlene, and I found the campsite where brautigan and his family stayed and I read aloud from trout fishing in America. I was engaged in what my father calls, a small one of those small world, building activities invoking, a relationship with whatever Cosmic Realms and agencies. We presuppose Authenticating realities that are imaginatively real, at little redfish Lake. I was imagining in great detail, the writer and his scenes of inspiration, my religious inclinations. It turns out go

00:37:14 Allison

beyond collecting meaningful objects. I will drive 600 miles to touch the Earth trod by a writer. Now the trip and its significance came into Focus. I'd gone to Idaho to invoke a relationship with ancestors. Both Literary the moments that big redfish Lake and at the campsite felt Transcendent because they were Transcendent the word Eucharist from Greek means Thanksgiving and my journey was a way of giving thanks."

00:37:46 Peggy

That was beautiful.

00:37:51 Peggy

You know, as a, as a person who grew up with, you know, classmates who are obsessed by brautigan. I've always thought that and hearing you talk about, especially I love, you know, paraphrasing, your father paraphrasing, I think I had one of those experiences where suddenly I was transported to being across a table. I don't know if you were there, but I know. Jennifer was there with Waverly Fitzgerald drinking Moscow Mules, And I had never seen anyone drink a Moscow Mule before and I'm like a little like freaked out because it's like to all restaurants or bars. So they have to order. Those special like copper little weird things. Ha ha. So just you're talking about objects and that that ordinariness just kind of even took me to that. So, thank you so much for being here with us tonight. You, you may not think yourself brave but But you are and I can tell that tomorrow is going to be an amazing, amazing event. So, I mean, when Dr. Death dies and his memorial is live stream from St. Mark's,

00:39:07 Peggy

I mean, that's that's big. So, best to you tomorrow.

00:39:17 Peggy

Taking a breath. Okay, so I'm now Switching gears. If anybody would like to let me know about reading during open mic, 3-minute Open Mic. Let me know in the chat. Now we're moving, and if you're just joining us, it's the I feel like I'm on radio. It's the three number 378, it's about time writers reading series. We are a partner with Seattle Public Library and we now keep the events of.. great Sandy says she'll read. And especially, could we take the events and they're available later on YouTube and also as a podcast on the Seattle Public Library site. So the pandemic has brought some blessings. I always wish that more people could be privy to the magic of the readings on Thursday nights without battling traffic and parking and that has come true. So Sylvia. Sylvia and I first met at Cancer Lifeline, it was my good fortune that she came back from an experience. I believe

in Antarctica ready to right after a life that had already been amazingly rich. Handful and I have the Good Fortune to be having

00:40:50 Peggy

her across the table from me. Sylvia Byrne Pollack was raised in a music-loving family in Batavia, NY. In the wake of Sputnik, she chose to study science. She earned a B.A. in Zoology from Syracuse University, a Ph.D in Developmental Biology from the University of Pennsylvania and a M.A. in psychology from Antioch University-Seattle. She is Research Professor Emeritus after a long career in cancer research at the University of Washington. Following a trip to Antarctica in 2007, Sylvia began to focus on poetry. Her poems appear in Floating Bridge Review, Crab Creek Review, Clover, and Antiphon among other print and online journals. She is a two-time Pushcart nominee, won the 2013 Mason's Road Winter Literary Award, was a 2019 Jack Straw Writer and will be a 2021 Mineral School resident. Her first collection, Risking It, was just published by Red Mountain Press. And she has launched an opinion - website, which is quite lovely. It is my pleasure to call her friend

00:42:05 Peggy

and to have been present at the birth of some of her writing Sylvia Pollock.

00:42:10 Sylvia

Peggy, thank you so much. As always, it's a pleasure to be here, It's about time, but Peggy has really played a major role in my writing life, many of the poems and risking it, got their start. With with a Peggy led writing session either Cancer Lifeline or the project Sunset Hill and Peggy has as I'm sure all of you know, this unparalleled ability to inspire and encourage people to find their voice and I can't thank her enough. So the last time I read it, it's about time was in March of 2019. And I read a series of deaf woman poems, and I'll start there tonight, but then I'll move on to give you a taste of what else is in here.

00:43:02 Sylvia

So we're going to begin with a prayer. You know we've just been talking about, Allison was talking about important things about what spirituality is? Here's the prayer prayer, falling on deaf ears. Dear God. Please send a decoder, an angel with mellifluous voice to perch in the rim of my are make her multi-armed so she can catch parse and juggle. The staccato, bursts of raqqa suring sibillance that pass for him and speech. Let her have a device to analyze the incoming cacophony, assemble. Syllables, give her an algorithm to detect possible words in English, Try them out for meaning in the context of a rapid conversation. What I'm saying, God is that she must be fast perceptive imaginative and indefatigable. It Trier out on those words. If you can't detail an angel to me, perhaps you can put video displays on the forehead of each person. I meet like super titles at the Opera, their words will scroll. Gently across writing the wrinkles If you'll do this, I promise to stop nodding in Angley,

00:44:24 Sylvia

laughing are looking serious at the wrong time. I will be a credit to your handiwork. If you decide to answer me, God, please stand squarely in front of me. Let me see your lips when you speak. [Reading] "Well, the deaf woman. How the deaf woman hears? The deaf woman, hears with heart.

And tuition curiosity, conversation is improved. She hears a word or two thrown into the room by some unidentifiable voice. It becomes a focused center around which is sentence crystallizes in her mind. This is called fill in the blanks. This is called hangman's noose. The rules are constructed of Jell-O overcooked. Spaghetti flexible open to interpretation and Interruption the deaf woman invents, continuity acts as if she understands This is a ruse sham subterfuge trick while calm. It is exhausting the exhausted deaf woman, tries to comprehend grasp. What a said, follow the thread of conversation She's heard this can lead to depression. Oh, yes. That old why bother feeling, huh? Ever hear wolves. The why bother?

00:46:01 Sylvia

Our bug is very length. This dark time of year. That passes the blood-brain barrier, latches onto receptors for dopamine, and oxytocin blocks feelings of roar, reward of love. Why bother is mediated by cytokines and Funhouse mirrors distorting? What is Goldilocks? Porridge is Lumpy and cold. The wolf's teeth fall out Jack and Jill. And listed went off to kill foreigners. Little bo peeps, flock was rendered redundant by tofu and said, Tom. In Mexico, Caravans a blind of - March North toward the Border, striking Terror and elephants. You're not asking for advice, but I just like to point out, this will be your 80th February, it always gets better. Oh, meditating helps. And here's some meditation instructions. And in three parts, one can't home. One whole mobile syllable make a chords with the relatives breathing in breathing out. Everything is here. Anger, fear, love on way. A cat proles beneath the bedroom window cleaning like a 2000 under and overtones Bridging the Gap between species. Two.

00:47:35 Sylvia

Concoct a soup from chicken, bones, parsnips, garlic and cayenne pharmacopoeia for the soul. Only remedy for the deep ache, the loneliness of sentience of being in a body and at sea, Three. Home is the Sailor humming. A shanty, the words risque. It's all a risk anyway. Hoping the lips to kiss or sing. Let's microbes in resistance is futile. If the cat has your tongue, let her keep it hum along. This is leticia's lost balloons. She attempts to meditate breathes in, breathe out, watches her breath, feeling her abdomen, rise and fall. And she remembers the shattered dining room fixture, Jagged edges of thought. Sliced, the narrow Corridor her attention Her Focus floats away, untethered balloon, she blows up, another breathe in, and out this time, two cycles and the car and truths. When can she get that hanging side mirror fixed Shiri commits to the breath to the act of meditating. But on the next exhale, it's gone. Come back. She calls to the minuscule balloon.

00:49:10 Sylvia

Did you fail lithium or did it fail you? Tiny elemental socket. Wrenches do a turn sometimes for the good sometimes not. Beleaguered synapses borrow transmitters, send frantic SOS signals, no ones receiving. Meanwhile there's a longing for some semblance of sanity, all the marbles cinched safely in a small hand, woven bag. None rolled under the sofa or used as ball bearings in a Rube Goldberg contraption. Intention is necessity stepdaughter. Waiting for her. Chance to step out, step up into a waiting pumpkin. When the wheels come off and they will lithium Works frantically to write the carriage. The inevitable ditch and to, which everything falls is filled with dank water, toads milfoil.

Word is sent for some desiccant. Where does sent for a sump pump? Word returns empty-handed. Now some words don't seem very useful but some are beautiful."

00:50:38 Sylvia

The next poem is a nobody a morning poem actually written with a group of a Peggy's project at Sunset Hill writers over there at Iron Springs. And for those of you who don't know where Iron Springs is, it's on the Olympic Peninsula, right on the Pacific coast.

00:51:01 Sylvia

[Reading] "Beyond the surf, the water flattens. Poker-faced Pacific holds all the cards deals them. When she chooses and our cabin perched on a high Bluff, the alarm clock, Jangles at first light, nobody said it. No one wants to be reminded of time at the tide in cysts. In and out mood, Rises and Falls stirs Flotsam and Jetsam such beautiful words for debris. Long ago at Iron Springs, despair wrestled with hope in a run-down cabin. Everything's refurbished now this morning Twisted Pines on the cliff. Welcome housekeeper wins tidying, these early hours into a new day. Hero's journey.

00:52:01 Sylvia

The hero's journey is now available as a package tour, sponsored by our band, your Alumni Association. It begins with a wide circle out from home base through wild mountains and their dubious inhabitants. Sasquatch Yeti. Some of villi child who to desiccated deserts, Random Encounters with camel, riding better one, small away. She's brilliant rocks. And onward through snake-infested jungles, where scampering monkeys, taunt bright costume, tourists snatching water bottles, biting them open until at last somewhere in the Southern Ocean drifting dangerously, close to Antarctica, a hurricane carelessly tossed as your cruise ship from Crest to trough of 30 foot waves. Over the PA system, the Russian captain, and tones, do not worry, she is strong ship. Confined, your cabin fed by a crewmember tossing sandwiches from the doorway. You ride the storm, take videos through a rollicking porthole. We will show those left at home, the fury and sound. You come safely to Harbor at the tip of a continent

00:53:26 Sylvia

that's drifting at the same rate, your fingernails grow. The lack of a manifest seems destined you have only today. This shirt, that's your favorite." I've two more poems. [Reading] "Intervention. As an epigraph by Eric Panky, this is like everyone else. I am waiting for death to intervene intervention what'll it be. Should I choose the author? Invoked delivery truck Laden with prime merchandise rushing to make a delivery smacking me. Sunny side up. Blood smeared like hot sauce. I'll take an airliner drifting slowly off course disappearing from radar until months. Later small chunks of wreckage wash up on that all's my fish already fish food, my bones scattered. Perhaps some more gradual, exit is preferable dwindling into incontinence, Oblivion, body and mind, reduced poultry vestiges. Would it be better to surrender to a saber-toothed tiger busily shredding bodies calling the week or be sold into slavery to that cruel, mistress cancer. I'm not brave enough to saunter in front of tiger truck. When

00:54:59 Sylvia

the slaver beckoned, I ran like the devil. For twenty years I've waited, to see what comes down the road for me, circling over my house our raptors and delivery drones, one has a package for me. And I just want to thank you all for being here tonight and Lily and Allison has just been wonderful. So I'm going to end with facing sunset pleasing. Sunset is different, of course from gazing at brilliant, tropical mornings with colors of mangoes and berries, streaking the sky. Or tracking the gradual rollback of fog Mist burning off as a son works. Its way down to the northwest coast. Now this is more relinquishing letting go of the, rheostat, no longer trying to control the light or the dark, just letting it happen, slow degree by degree. The shifting of colors and focus, the lovely word dusk painting, the undersides of cumulus clouds. for final flare of color and light as the sun dips, into the sea, where today is extinguished, memories of lied and nights, mystery floats, with a hand-carved bent wood box waiting

00:56:27 Sylvia

to be opened." Thank you.

00:56:31 Peggy

Thank you Sylvia, you're way too kind to me. It's you can imagine what it was like and I see a many of my Cancer Lifeline writers and friends here to suddenly you know have Sylvia sitting across the table. Just

00:56:49 Peggy

like we started joke that she is like almost dangerous. She's so weirdly good. She could bring the smell of onions into the room when she saw table and I also wanted to follow Allison. You said that you had never read on Zoom before but you taught your an excellent reader on Zoom. You're all excellent readers tonight, such a delight and it's such a pleasure for me to hear new works and also like Sylvia's works. It realize that because I have seen some of those poems and heard them and you can also here Elizabeth Austin, we probably go through the archives interview and talk to Sylvia about her poem. The Deaf the particular deaf Woman poem that she started by reading. It's almost like the more you read them over for work, some familiar with the more I love them. They become like, cherished, photographs, they become like the ones that you just go to over and over again. So every time I hear it, it strikes some cord, that's all be familiar in my body and just love them. So I'm happy to say that.

00:58:04 Peggy

Also Sandra has said she will do the open mic. So here's our other internet star or woman who threw cultivating voices. Live has just kept us all going for the last year. Sandra are you still there? Unmute. Sandra has a foot note name now, as the last writer's craft person to present for the pandemic. Yeah, it's going to be a footnote forever.

00:58:43 Sandra

I'm very very happy to have that badge. So, so, so well because it was one of the last times that I did anything in person either. Are so well, I've got one poem for y'all tonight. And I want to just I just want

to say that Allison and I went to graduate school together and so, I have a long history with Allison and

00:59:19 Sandra

You know, I'm sending out a lot of love to you and your family, and I want to do this wacky little poem for you tonight that ironically was published today and swim every day was the feature poem. We have a little known fact that you ever need a tour of in Minneapolis of Mary Tyler Moore's, old haunts. Call up Allison green because she can she will give a killer tour of Minneapolis and the Mary Tyler Moore Show. Well in that vein, I'm going to read a poem about one of my idols from childhood David Cassidy.

01:00:11 Sandra

So here it is and I should also say Sylvia and I are poets on the coast together and so we're sisters, poets on the coast sisters and I always love to hear you read and going to be booking you for a reading with us on cultivating voices. So this is a poem that I wrote with with the with poets, on the coast last September started there. It's called David Cassidy Writes Me a Fan Letter from the Great Painted Bus Beyond. [Reading] "Okay, here I am letter from the great painted bus beyond. From the pages of all those Tiger Beat magazines, you purchased with your allowance. I became more like sugar. With each poster you pulled from the centerfolds staples. I never liked that my crotch was always pinned to 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 my original songs but ones, no one heard over the din of those pop hits that ABC's money moguls

01:01:32 Sandra

shoveled into my mouth. During box lunches on the set, I had to sign thousands of postcards to girls I've never met. I was drowning, Sandy, in the fountain of Teen Idol Fame. And I didn't know how to swim who does in that kind of water. I became a paper ghost and only the drugs and sex told me I was alive. What would can I say? Why I am I risking this from better than all 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 undertow of the trapdoors. Wait, come on, you know how to escape to get happy. You almost do it. It every day except you act. Like it's your shadow side, you never let yourself. They'll fully embrace 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 tear a hardy in your living room that you have two microphones at the ready to practice when you feel inspired

01:03:06 Sandra

by my lips. Going 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 sing."

01:03:58 Sandra

Thanks for putting up with me tonight, everybody. And I'm going to put in the chat. We have a really special reading coming up on Sunday, called witness to conversation in poetry with three generations of Asian American women poets on Sunday and I look forward to seeing you all soon. Be well.

01:04:24 Peggy

Thank you. And you know you said about like, you know, get rid of those like fan magazines but you held up a fan magazine.

01:04:34 Sandra

Actually the record album.

01:04:35 Peggy

Okay, okay. I was gonna say otherwise, we've still got it.

01:04:39 Sandra

I have the lunch box. I have the thermos. I have the trading card still. I have a David Cassidy, jigsaw puzzle. All of it.

01:04:45 Peggy

I don't remember, is he still alive?

01:04:48 Sandra

No, he's no. That's what, that's why the fan letters from the great painted bus beyond.

01:04:54 Peggy

Yeah, and I have trouble keeping track. Thank you. Thank you. Every Sunday is another amazing day.

01:05:05 Sandra

Thanks Peggy. Appreciate it.

01:05:08 Peggy

So, did anybody else want to do open mic? Give

01:05:11 Peggy

me a little wave. I haven't heard from anybody else. So at this point what I will do less than anybody else wants to join us. Is I'm going to stop the recording and everybody is welcome to chit chat and catch up. It has been a wonderful evening. I say that every time but there's always a special magic and so it's never the same. There really has been a way of feeling connected in a different way since we went online and also being able to see so many people that wouldn't have been able to come and



also sometimes to hear them better. Now, in the library is always people come in and go under somebody fighting outside or leaving the door open. So I could really hear you and that is delightful. And it's so wonderful to have so many groups that were crossing over and reconnecting tonight friends and family, mini writing group. So, I hope we'll see you next month and good night.

