



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series #381

00:00:01 Peggy

Welcome, everyone. I believe this is reading number 381 but with the heat-wave we're having I may be mixing up my numbers with the temperature. Anyway, be glad that with temperatures that peak in Seattle at 6 pm that we have not been making our way through traffic to gather, even in an air-conditioned room to be together. Although, Oh, I would love to be in person with you, Especially during these times. It is kind of a joy to be able to welcome someone that people from all over the country, as well as a reader from Oregon and throughout the Seattle area, people who wouldn't be with us otherwise. Tonight we will be hearing from Asia Renee, Laura S. Tarasoff, Marlena Williams and Marjorie Osterhout with at least one person who has let me know they'll be doing the open mic. And that was the order that we're going to be hearing from tonight. I'd first like to also say, real special welcome to Marlena and Marjorie, who I haven't seen since April. We had the good fortune to be kind of early guinea

00:01:22 Peggy

pigs. The best guinea pigs in the world for when Hedgebrooke decided that they were ready to reopen their doors to writing retreats for women. And it was based on not the same kind of applications as before. And thank you Allison Echelles for telling me about it. But based on how you could demonstrate that you needed that retreat, and then for very reasonable amount, we were able to go. And so it was incredible to be united with Marjorie, who I had met sort of, and what seems like a past life and to meet Marlena, who was up from Oregon. So and I believe Asia is joining us tonight from Bremerton. So we're scattered somewhat. Where are you? Laura?

00:02:12 Laura

I'm on Whidbey Island.

00:02:15 Peggy

There you go. This would not be a Ballard night. So alright and Elysia. Just let me know when you can... let me know if I'm pronouncing your name wrong... about a second open mic. So welcome everyone. It's a great pleasure to have you all to continue this tradition into well into its 32nd

00:02:35 Peggy

year at least, And to also now be able to extend the evenings to people who aren't able to be present through the form of the YouTube and the podcast, which has been a longtime dream of ours. So I'd

like to introduce Asia. Now she is a poet/artist, is an enigmatic person who transmutes her experiences through the creation of her work. She seeks to resonate with chords in the hearts of those listening. So welcome Asia.

00:03:18 Asia

Hi. So first, I'm going to read this piece called "Rancid Waters."

00:03:27 Asia

[Reading] "Tapping- tap tap tap tapping into a vein. I rarely prime for harvest. Rivers of fear gently seep from my pierced skin. Sensing my hesitance, swarms loom around me. Invisible sharks. Come to claim my body as breakfast. Clapping I seek to muster enough self-belief to spend them on retreat, Heart fluttering from mine, palpitations pumping. I think I can. And you can do this as weakly as a thready pulse. Flickering to gray, the sharks Inhale the last of my positive vibes, then take their time, nibbling and eternity past, as I express my last wish that I would have believed more. Well, I was alive." And that's the first one.

00:04:22 Asia

All right, This next one is called "Call Me Medusa."

00:04:33 Asia

[Reading] "I have shared my head of luscious locks in exchange for the snakeskin of Medusa's Crown. I abandoned my naiveté and my river flow, where the water is red, a lake of fire and sulfur stench may as well call me shrew winch and bench player. Shrouds hold my joy behind grayscale curtains, and I have nearly given up hope. Up the slopes and against all odds, I continue forward trajectory on an unnamed. The last part of my innocence fading. My soul is light is a dark deep night, prideful and alone in this living grave." Thank you. And that's the second one. This next piece is called "Collapse" [Reading] "Catapulted through the sky on a high. And then my bones collide with the ground. I collapse with the sound. I pretend to be okay since there's no place in this world where my feelings matter. I'm Mad Hatter through winding ellipses, a maze of dots and contorted thoughts. I check my face for fever. Insanity is chills and hurts. Rage, leave me broken. I was really truly hoping you could love me first forever. For always, but I'm not the first and last voice you want to hear. And then morning and night, I'm commonplace to you, Not the best of the best. So as I lay my tears to rest and they fade, I hardened my soul, like the finest of jade."

00:06:14 Asia

The last piece I'm going to read is a little bit long. It shouldn't be more than four minutes though. Okay,

00:06:24 Asia

[Reading] "Beat down by life. But still, we stand, take another lick to take another lick. The entitlement of last labor that was never theirs to reap stolen time That was never theirs to keep. The slumber. Why did my people sleep? Because to wake is to feel the curse is seemingly ordained. I am still asleep waiting to be free. How much longer will I wait patiently beat down by life? But still, we stand.

Take another lick to take another lick. When will we fight? What weapons will be chosen pen and paper books and knowledge? Or will I revert to pre-college tactics? Brute force to the violence against me will be justified. She was out of control. She was a threat we had to. They will say, but they will not speak of how I became fed up. They will not speak on my life's tragedies or sorrows. Beat down by life. But still, we stand. Take another look to take another lick. The only scraps are remain will be the shrapnel it in my chest, because as much as I should, I don't own a bulletproof vest. I will be collateral.

00:07:40 Asia

My damage will be inconsequential like my death. And in the end, What's next is no one will be left. But the strongest, the smartest in the survivors, the live in trees, a few straggling branches that escaped before a lan and the plantation days, glorified by the week, could be a distant defeat be down by life. But still, we stand, take another lick to take another lick. Our generations declare death before dishonor and say, we run these streets. Run. These streets are died. Enslavement wouldn't fly, because in killer be killed, We'd all end up slaughtered before telling her that's not ours to claim crops that aren't ours to eat. But that slumber. Why did my people sleep? We'd not till the earth now, but we are so crops with no profit uses props to hold a woman place as it leaves Faiths. Hope hopes probably has him ways, Never leave me unscathed, do or say die, but don't rely so heavily on other superior fight. It's your legwork to walk through your dream to create and leave those behind you reveling in. You're awake, dare to hope and raise the stakes." Thank you for the time.

00:09:00 Peggy

Thank you so much, right? You really made that resonate. It's beautiful. Brought to you to something so powerful and painful evening. So thank you. You have plenty of time. You could have read more.

00:09:18 Peggy

So Asia may not be able to stay the whole evening. So if you have any questions, we can always you know, bring you back to answer them, or you can answer the you know, you can ask her and chat. Next. I'd like Carol to unmute. Welcome Carol.

00:09:39 Carol

Thank you. I'll read two poems.

00:09:47 Carol

[Reading] "What was always going to happen happened based on this promise. He was searching to hear. He bought the house that needed no work like soups, passion for noodles. It became his lifetime occupation. He patched gutters, sealed leaks and snaked drains plumbed and wired and paint it and paneled, built all the furniture and wall to wall shelves for books and lavish displays and forged fresh space by building 5 beguiling bay windows. He claimed to have mastered many skills, Hoping he never would have to use them again,

00:11:06 Carol

Superstars of deadpan drama. And there's an epigraph, Some March 4th attempting to put today to bed for good,

00:11:22 Carol

Not the deaths. The synchronicities will be our personal plot As if it's Opera when it's Opera, the suspense of its libretto, voluptuous voices, repeating ale motif not one of us can escape evoking sorrow in mellifluous arias melting melodic lines. Solo vows, libretto kicks off when my father, who lived in Denver died, heart attack driving to Cheyenne March 4th 1967

00:12:18 Carol

Before Sunrise March 4th 1973. My son's father living in Tel Aviv died Is music in our memory mourns morning, even the gleam of his saxophone without his breath. My mother, after planting perennials by her Pecan Grove in Green Valley near Tucson, never woke from a stroke on Sunday March 3rd close enough in 1991.

00:13:06 Carol

My father's wife's father finally died this morning while snow threaten Northbrook, Illinois of all days. It's March 4th 2021

00:13:29 Carol

There are 365 days, right in a year.

00:13:39 Carol

No, my son, his wife and my self have lost parents. Who perished in a march on the fourth day, each dying parent on a different day. Wonder, when will the last act end leaving? What's not mapped out in this drama? A magnitude of silence?"

00:14:20 Peggy

Thank you. Carol. Kind of gives me extra chills during the Carol is just up the street. And I will never think the same way about March 4th again. I always think that that's my sister's birthday. I only have one sister, but then I realized that her birthday is the fifth. Good. I know. But every year I go into this panic. Thank you. Go into a panic. Reminds me that would be expiration date. Hmm. Thank you. Get my attention for open mic tonight. All right, now, I'd like to introduce Laura over on Whidbey. Thank you. a poet, writer, explorer, and believer of people. Her first chapbook is Warm Cinnamon Rolls on Sunday Morning. Laura lives on Whidbey Island, Washington with her partner, where they run a home business and enjoy the splendor of island life. Her work has appeared in Peeking Cat Poetry Journal, Writing In a Woman's Voice blog, and 3rd Act Magazine. She expands her technology skills on her new website. Welcome Laura.

00:15:51 Laura

Oh, thank you very much. It's great to be with you all again. I'll be at Virtua. We were talking over dinner about how nice it was to not have to drive to Ballard on what we affectionately refer to as a school night, because I have to be to work at 5:30 in the morning, but I am remembering driving to

Ballard and enjoying a lovely dinner, Just the road down the road from the library. And so I do look forward to chance to be able to do these things in public in person again. But so I have a few poems for you tonight. Most are from the book. But there are a couple of new additions. [Reading] "Remembering Me. Walking through the house of precious memories and mementos for sale, realizing the maze of tin boxes and figurines tied up in multi colored ribbon mean more to us, individually Then to us, then to the collective us, I am drawn into thoughts of my own mortality.

00:16:59 Laura

And in the space I take up in this world, wondering what will become the estate sale that tells my story. Three for a dollar 99. If someone tried to draw a footprint of my existence, what would it include? The sharp corner of a coffee table? Hit my I hit my shin on answering a cry for help. The round curves of a flower vase That came and said - but filled my heart with joy. Could they tell my story from these things, walking through the house of precious memories and mementos for sale, Reliving the archaeology of the generations before me? I hope I am remembered for more than the landfill hotter that fills my home."

00:17:50 Laura

This is actually a new one that probably still needs a little more work. But Well, it tells its own story.

00:18:03 Laura

[Reading] "The wolves are in the henhouse, and the turkeys invited them in. Now, the pecking order is replaced with survival and self-preservation, sounding the alarm squawking for help running to find safety that doesn't exist. The turkeys mourn the victims and then realized the world wolf is running out of chickens, and turkey is just as tasty." Like children are not supposed to have a favorite poem, But this is probably my favorite.

00:18:42 Laura

[Reading] "Apology. I would like to apologize for not being perfect. I would like to. But I'm not going to. You see, I have no intention for perfection. I am me. I love me. I like who me is me is imperfect. Me loves with veracity. Laughs with abandon believes with passion. Me Slurps spaghetti Cries at Movies leaves, dishes in the sink Me speaks. What me feels me, Makes mistakes me trust and forgiveness Myself tried to convince me and I to conform instead, Me and I convinced myself to just be me myself. And I are content together. We hope you love us in our imperfect - but if you don't, we're okay with that. Someday, someday, someone will no apologies required homily of disconnection. We are gathered together on social media. A note place to express yourself for who you are, As long as you are funny sweet, or a good cook in our individual boxes, settled into our cushion pews, sipping Our communion cups to worship at the altar of the 55 inch television. Ready to hear A sermon from our beloved truth-tellers

00:20:35 Laura

with a green screen graphics and ticker-tape breaking news Finishing with a feel-good story Assuring us. Our life isn't so bad like children Calmed with a bedtime prayer cut quickly to the manicured game show Host, Wheeling us away from the harsh reality that life is hard with the hope of the next letter

00:21:03 Laura

pities. Pious grace with fear of a child's mind. This grown woman's battle is lost. The darkness Persuaded. Her freedom isn't worth the cost. Did everything she knew to live life and be strong thundering demons. One convinced her. She was wrong. Nailed boards over windows added locks to the door, never leaves her prison, home securities, What she's longing for blindly. She sits in a well-lit room. Mind- mind's eyes close to the possibilities that the chance of outside could offer a life in a world full of tranquility. Pities, a pious emotion reserved for the secure ads bars to the imprisoned shackles. The unsure lend your words of strength, breathe deep. The freedom, you know, exhale. The seeds of the angels give you two. So raise up this grown child. So there are her heart is free to grow to be the giving woman. The world needs to know. We all have our prisons, some are easier to see. One day the earth will tremble opening doors for all to be free. Take care of judging this woman Who's losing to the demons cry. If all the love you can remembering, But for grace, there go I."

00:22:37 Laura

One more. The title of the poem is "Warm cinnamon rolls on Sunday morning"

00:22:45 Laura

[Reading] "Flower, dusted memories of dough rolled out on Saturday night, like a star-studded Premiere wide-eyed fans dream of sweet, Sweet dough rising to the occasion. Bakery box is filled with giant rolls, made by a faker favorite baker ready to be served warm and gooey. When the aroma of cinnamon and butter wraps the home in a warm hug, Spirits rise with the soft dough, Deep breaths fill the census Sending sweet filled oxygen to the brain, peeling the layer of the week, stress away, No matter where you call home a small flat shared with fur babies, or a large house filled with people. When the smell of cinnamon rolls Wow laughs through the air on Sunday morning there There is bliss Science has told us that cinnamon is good for the heart. But we already knew that." Thank you for having me.

00:23:52 Peggy

It's always a joy. Thank you. What a lovely piece till to leave us with tickle the senses with cinnamon and affect our heart as well. So you're right. Thank you from bakers. And, you know, believe me, there's

00:24:11 Peggy

a lot of Ballard restaurants are still open, but you didn't have to drive here that that's. There's there's all that future unfolding for us, and we're back. So, all right, Thank you so much. Now I'm well, I could introduce at Lycia, but I probably saying her name wrong. So please welcome for our next open mic- Alesia, and go ahead and unmute and tell me how to truly pronounce your name.

00:24:41 Alisha

So my name is Alisha, Alisha Alisha.

00:24:47 Peggy

And where are you joining us from tonight?

00:24:49 Alisha

And I Joining you all the way from Seleucia in the Caribbean.

00:24:54 Peggy

Wow. Welcome.

00:24:59 Alisha

Thank you. Okay. So this evening, I'll be reading two pieces for my time. "Nobody" and "The lines."
[Reading] "Hey Goose. There is a nobody in me. I fear who steals my voice. When monsters I know come to visit. My nobody welcomes them to my space. Where we seek peace and silence for we still war with words. Messiah, then not cuts my nobody out of my being to be home. My nobody who invites the monsters to play the colors games I always lose for I do not know to say, without feeling my nobody Who believes that should not sudden us for What is life without death to prey on us. My nobody, my militants. Nobody who longs to battle my friend referrals. But I long for peace, where I dreaded quarrels and nothing. And I hurt is only and not loving in this endless squabble with self." Thank you.

00:26:26 Alisha

The second piece is entitled "The Lines."

00:26:33 Alisha

[Reading] "Far. Near Seleucia the thick ashen fog lingers until a blinding white light emerges and weeds it waits all night. I know that it waits for them. Those whose souls left their bodies. They wander this world feeling nothing, wanting nothing, seeing nothing. Everything becomes nothing to them, Even the right, But it still waits for them. Only for them. I knew it is It waited for me once, and I came to it."

00:27:31 Peggy

Thank you so much for joining us. I love how your first poem. You know, my nobody was such a lovely follow-up to me myself. And I, before Asia, before we started recording Asia, there was a theme for tonight. I said, I usually find the theme has emerged after the evening. But just as with the quilt behind me often feel that all the readers, the what they share, becomes a creation itself, It becomes a quilt that makes perfect sense the way they fit together. So I'm delighted you can join us, and you must join us again another month and have more time to read. Thank you. Okay, Now I'm going to introduce Marlena Williams. A little closer to home and in Portland, Oregon. Okay, so I had the Good Fortune to be at the cottage in closest proximity to Marlena at Hedgebrooke. It was it was such a special special time. So I'm delighted to be able to not see her in person. But here a little bit more of her work beyond what was shared one night around a fire pit. So Marlena Williams is a writer

00:28:55 Peggy

from Portland Oregon. She holds an MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. You can find her work in Electric Literature, Literary Hub, the Rumpus, Across the Margin, Propeller, and the Oregon Encyclopedia. She is also the director of the short documentary Tribute City about the thriving tribute band scene in Portland. All right, welcome. Feel free to like, let people know a little bit about your, you know, any preface you feel needed?

00:29:16 Marlena

Yeah, I should probably preface it. Okay, I'm going to be reading from a essay collection. I've been hanging on to this for a while now, about the 1973 horror classic The Exorcist. And it's kind of also about my relationship with my mother. So those two themes kind of graded together. The essay I'm going to read does have some language in it. So just giving a content warning, There's a brief, brief section where I'm going to say some pretty bad swear words. So apologies in advance. Okay, So this is called "Mercedes McCambridge Eats a Raw Egg."

00:30:01 Marlena

[Reading] "The human fetus begins to detect sounds from outside the womb at just 16 weeks. By this point, The tiny bones of the middle Ear can respond to the vibrations of acoustic waves, which are then carried via the cranial nerve to the neurons in the brain responsible for processing sound. The cochlea eardrum and also coils are fully formed by week 24 week 32. The human ear is complete, Though amniotic fluid knuckles, Incoming sound. The fetus is still highly sensitive to the world's racket outside noises affects you to heart patterns, movement and sleep. And anything above 100 decibels is known to cause fetal stress, Parenting books, caution, pregnant women to avoid chainsaws, gunfire, rock concerts, jet engines and motorcycles. The fetus is sensitive to quieter noises to ultrasound images have shown fetuses turning their heads ever so slightly in response to the sound of their mother's voice. When the mother speaks, the sound is amplified as it travels down her body and reverberates through

00:31:11 Marlena

her bones for months. The fetus floats in a pool, echoing with his mother's bodily cacophony. I can hear the sound of her heartbeat, her breathing for digestion. It can hear her walking, chewing, drinking, coughing, Vomiting, burping, Laughing, crying, Swearing and screaming because the average human scream reaches above ten decibels. Women are also advised to avoid screaming while pregnant. This, of course, is an odd bit of advice, as women are so rarely encouraged to scream at all.

00:31:49 Marlena

One of the most shocking things about the 1973 Horror classic. The Exorcist is in what you see, but what you hear. Early audiences were as terrified by the sounds the possessed little girl made as they were by the horrible things she was made to do. In fact, the sounds were so terrifying precisely because they were coming out of the mouth of a 12 year old girl. A child couldn't possibly make noises like that at the height of her possession. Bronchial wheezes and guttural moan seep out of a young girl's mouth as it Hell itself is yawning awake The voice, like some dying animal clawing, its way out of smoke, through throat smoke. Strict throat isn't the voice of a young innocent whose vocal

cord seems primed from giggles and song. This is the devil's work. A child couldn't possibly say those horrible words. Either your mother sucks cock and cocks, and he'll stick your cock up her ass. You mother-fucking worthless cocksucker. Your cuntling daughter. and An abomination. Words not meant for a child's lips,

00:32:53 Marlena

though *The Exorcist* is often defined by its most well-known images. The spinning had the spewing vomit with rust and crucifix, much of its enduring horror is thanks to career-defining vocal performance of Mercedes McCambridge. No, Linda Blair did not, in fact, make those blood-curdling noises herself, just as a stunt double named Eileen Dietz was brought in to perform some of the more gruesome physical acts required by the script director. William Friedkin enlisted McCambridge to give voice to the demon Pazuzu. The performance would become so iconic that it obliterated everything else about McCambridge's storied career. When she died in 2004 at the age of 88, her *USA Today* obituary referred to her in its headline as *The Exorcist* actress, which must have caused some confusion amongst readers who saw it and assume that Linda Blair, not McCambridge and suddenly passed on. Orson Wells once called McCambridge the world's greatest living radio actress. Born Carlotta Mercedes Agnes McCambridge in Juliet

00:33:56 Marlena

Illinois. She rose to prominence during the 1930s on radio programs like 'Lights Out,' 'Inner Sanctum,' and 'Radio Mystery Theater.' McCambridge was the kind of star that didn't need to be seen to make an impact, though. They went, though, when she was seen on Broadway or alongside Hollywood icons like Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, she held her own. McCambridge won the Oscar for best supporting actress in 1949 for her role as Sadie Burke and *All the King's Men*, and was nominated again seven years later, for her performance in *Giant*, the last of James Dean's films. She quickly gained a reputation for playing rough, strong little brats who spoke their minds. Shutting the type of whispering busty, memorable parts that might have granted her Fame Eternal, of course, with their slightly pointed nose and short dark hair. McCambridge was far from a Hollywood bombshell. She didn't need to be not when she had that voice. It was a one of a kind voice, simultaneously trembling and

00:34:57 Marlena

so onerous with a haunting crackle that could at any point explode into something howling and wild. McCambridge is. Heavy drinking likely gave her voice at least some of its distinctive bite. Her drinking contributed to two divorces, several hospitalizations and a mid-career slump that had her grasping for bit parts And episodes of *Bewitched* and *Lost in Space*. Though she was in recovery by the beginning of the 1970s, and must have come as a relief and a surprise. When freed can offer her a role in his new horror film, She would not appear on screen. You told her, But it was her voice that would bring the demon to life. Read. Candace said that McCambridge was perfect because her voice was neutral. Neither male or female. She was 56 when she stepped into the sound studio. McCambridge committed to the part before recording, She chain smoked cigarettes and garbled and noxious combination of raw eggs and whiskey, a soul for his cocktail, made all the more potent and light. McCambridge.

00:36:03 Marlena

And McCambridge has addiction. McCambridge, A devoted Catholic demanded that her priest remain in the studio at all times to help her fight the demons call. While recording she was strapped to a chair, her arms and legs down so she could barely move. McCambridge has said she didn't want to be tied up. Friedkin maintains. It was all her idea. Either way. This is what gives the voice its vengeful straining rasp. It is the sound of a human animals struggling against its restraints raging to break through the broken body that contains it. If you listen closely, there are layers to the sound. Two, three, four different strains often seemed to Echo at once, the demon wheezes, or growls or screams. It laughs or cries. It's hard to tell the difference. There's something jarringly comical about it too. At times, McCambridge seems to adopt a refined British accent at other times a hateful, feral snarl, and underneath it all, the foul bite of whiskey hot and burning on the tongue. It wasn't

00:37:14 Marlena

hard for me to imagine the rage. McCambridge said, in the documentary: the fear of God, you see if it's this close in me, right here. And I'm only human being, it's that close in everybody. McCambridge had one child a son born in 1941. She was only 23 when she had him, her career was just beginning. That son, John Markle, would grow up to become an eccentric Futures Trader with the PHD in economics and a penchant for wearing purple shoes. His coworker at the Arkansas investment firm, Stephens Inc, alleged that Markle once threatened to kill him with an AK-47 and then theatrically loaded the trunk of his car with his guns to prove he had the firepower to do it. Markle was like his mother in at least one obvious way. His constant drinking and smoking made him an unhealthy man. So unhealthy, then he needed a sextuple bypass by age 43 and in the wake of the surgery McCambridge briefly relocated to Arkansas so she could be close to her ailing son and his family, even though this meant taking

00:38:22 Marlena

a break from her newfound work at a non-profit treatment center for men and women dealing with addiction. While working at Stephen's Inc, Markle opened a secret bank account in his mother's name, forging her signature and embarking upon a five-year embezzlement scheme that would eventually end once Markle had been arrested. Once before he was arrested for public intoxication in soliciting a prostitute. But this was the crime that spiraled beyond his control. When the shocked and enraged McCambridge refused to cooperate in the restitution proceedings that would have spared Markle from criminal prosecution, Markle snapped on a stormy lightning storm on a November morning in 1987. Markle took a pair of guns, possibly out of the trunk of his car, and shot his wife, his two daughters. And then, with one gun pointed on either side of his head himself. Police found a rubber old man mask in the scene of the crime, the drooping beige kind with the wrinkles and the creepy grin, which I think Markle

00:39:24 Marlena

might have been wearing when he killed his family. They also found a blood splattered letter Markle left to his mother, simultaneously taking responsibility for the crime and blaming it all on her. In the bitter note, Markle wrote: you were never around much when I needed you. So now I and my whole

family are dead. So you can have the money. Night, Mother. News reports made a big fuss about The Nightmare on Elm Street tape in the VCR At the time of the murder. Another supernatural horror story that traces the grisly trajectory of murder back to the sins of the mother.

00:40:03 Marlena

A small part of me understands more, not the murderous part of him, but the part of him that was crying out for help. How easy it is to blame our mothers for all our problems. To pin our every downfall or misfortune on them. Humans have been doing it for centuries. It's a bitter concoction to swallow, knowing our mothers won't always be there for us when we need them. That they too, are fighting their own private demons found by a darkness they cannot escape and must have weighed heavy on Markle to hear his mother, wail and bark and scream for the entire world to hear. So few of our mothers ever show us what they are capable of, or dare to lay bare the raw pain and rage clawing at their hearts." Thank you.

00:40:51 Peggy

Thank you. So really I was just... been holding their breath. Wow.

00:41:01 Peggy

Oh, you make me want to write essays. Well, first, you want me, you know, you make me want to be like the writer that you are, and then write essays That was really amazing. I, you know, I wish I knew that there was people listening who are ready to start giving you an advance on that collection. So, wow. Okay, recovering... your coming. Okay? Should I see The Exorcist? You know, I've never seen it. Okay, I am not a horror movie fan. But, you know, I think Grandpa... and didn't you say that it's coming up on the anniversary? It came out the end of 1973 so it'll be the 50-year anniversary Like, I think, in December of 2023. I'm feeling like maybe it came out on March 4th 1973.

00:42:12 Peggy

Wow. Thank you so much. I hope your work is going well. And don't let your day job interfere with writing. Yeah, really keep going all. And now to switch to another form of horror that's more better known in the history books. Let me introduce Marjorie. Marjorie Osterhout is a writer, editor, and storyteller. Her essays and articles have appeared in anthologies like It's A Boy (Seal Press) and magazines including Parents, Parenting, and ePregnancy. She also spent a whirlwind three years travel writing for Disney. She is a former managing editor, columns editor, and columnist ("Dear Marjo") for Literary Mama. In February 2020 she launched a daily series, Today in Salem.

00:43:51 Marjorie

[Reading] "July 7th today, Today and Salem, the beggar Sarah Goode is holding her clay pipe close and peering into its bowl, turning it slowly. She's had no tobacco for weeks, not even a fleck. She was hungry for it at first hungry, or even than food. But now she just misses its comfort. She brings the bowl to her nose and inhales gently. The faint scent of tobacco is too wispy to fill her lungs. But it's still there. She thinks about her life before prison. Was it really any better than this? Back then she'd had to beg for tobacco, never mind food clothes and sometimes a place to sleep, And not just for her, but also for her children. Sarah hits the pipe against the stone wall, She can barely think about what's

about to happen. What lies ahead? She hits the pipe again, harder this time. It's old made of clay and well used,

00:44:58 Marjorie

but it doesn't break it. Never will. July 8, today and Salem. And now friendless Elizabeth. Excuse me. Did now friendless Elizabeth How, bunches her petticoats under her bruised knees and kneels to pray once again on the jail's brick floor. She's been fasting and praying for nearly every moment. Since she was condemned eight days ago, she knows that she must die. God has ordained it. She has very little time to remove the stone in her heart to prepare to meet God with peace. So she praised understand the judges who were so quick to believe her accusers 12 people have testified on her behalf. How can the Judge is not see that she's innocent? She prays for the afflicted girls to who, for reasons she cannot begin to fathom, have turned on her so fiercely. Some of them are children past the age of reason. But children, nonetheless, some of them, though, are older, and they seem to delight in their accusations. Why? What has she done? Most of all she prays for her neighbors who've been so convinced

00:46:23 Marjorie

for so long that she is hurt them. They are grieving for their young daughter, of course, and perhaps they are too afraid to blame God. But why are they blaming her? She can't make sense of it, but she also cannot meet God with a hardened heart. So she stays on her bruised knees, failing hungry, seeking forgiveness. July 9th, today and Salem. The sharp tongue Susanna Martin rubs, the inside corners of her eyes and breathes shakily in her usual outspoken manner. She's addressed the judges as rogues and devils and called the afflicted girls liars. She's always had trouble controlling her tongue, but she has no regrets. She's tried to be a good Puritan, but it's like wearing a cap that's too tight. God has already ordained whether she's saved or condemned and nothing she says or does will make a difference. So why pretend? Why constrict herself? July 10th, today in Salem. The prison is dark, and it will wash. And the overwhelming smells of dung and filth. But while the other women lie in

00:47:45 Marjorie

the dirty hay or leaned against the cold walls, the flamboyant and rebellious Sarah Wild satchets. Even at she paces, she has no illusions about her fate. She is too pretty too eager for love. She touches her neck, thinking about the noose that sure awaits her. And the silk scarf that she weren't many years ago. Ha, the judges had been so self-righteous about that scarf, but she'd confessed and accepted punishment for it, just as she had four other offenses, even fortification. July 14th, today and Salem. The vagrant Sarah Goode is pleading with the pregnant Elizabeth Proctor for help. Sarah has He's always been an angry beggar, likely to throw a stone as she is to say, thank you. But today is different. She will be hanged in five days, leaving behind her four-year-old daughter Dorcas, who is also in jail. Please will Elizabeth take care of her after Sarah is taken away? Make sure she eats sleeps? Says her prayers? Sarah has chosen Elizabeth carefully. Pregnant Elizabeth is less likely to

00:49:11 Marjorie

be hanged, and she still has young children herself. So she knows the needs of a four-year-old. Elizabeth hesitates, little Dorcas hasn't once slept her mother's side, hissing and scratching at anyone

who draws near. A bite of bread, a wink, a scrap of string. Nothing quiets her or tames her. But what else can Elizabeth do? She gives a small nod. The girl will eat when she's hungry and sleep when she's tired. Prayers are unimaginable, except on her behalf, but Elizabeth can at least do that. July 18th, today In Salem. The Grave Digger is alone, stone, similar clay, digging, pulling and throwing dirt with his sugar, thinking about last night's eclipse of the moon. Red had been blood red. He can't help thinking it, but while the red shadow had disturbed him, it was the white crescent of light at its Edge, growing, smaller and smaller that he can't stop thinking about tomorrow. Five women. Five, which is, he reminds himself will hang. But the jails are full with so many more people still to be

00:50:36 Marjorie

tried, and the magistrates are arresting work every day. Is it possible that all of them are guilty? How many more graves will he need to dig in jail? The now friendless Elizabeth How touches her blind husband, who's just paid her final jail bill. The sharp tongue to Susanna Martin without years ago paces and mutters to herself. The rebellious Sarah Wilds. Also, wouldn't she whisper with her only son? The beggar Sarah Goode huddles in a corner alone, except for her four-year-old daughter, who tomorrow will refuse all comfort. The Beloved Rebecca Nurse prays with her elderly husband. July 19th, today in Salem. The sheriff is choking on the hot desk. Rising around his cart as it jerks along the dirt road. Five women nail in the cart three of them, Elderly, all of them with their hands, tied behind them with only a single horse to pull the heavy cart. It's a slow journey to the hanging tree where a minister played some horseback and unsure crowd. Chuckling Huntington will pray, of course, but

00:52:01 Marjorie

it's also his job to urge each woman to confess and repent for her sins. The cart has hardly stopped when the deputies began to pull the women off one at a time until they reach the beggar Sarah Goode. Stay. One of them says, and puts up his hand, The gesture isn't lost on Sarah. She lurches forward as if to attack. But her hands are tied, and she falls back into the cart confess. The minister says, repent for your lies. Sarah takes a deep breath, And it rips in a rage spitting and twisting away from the deputy who's holding her back. A second Deputy means to tie her petticoats and legs together. And the crowd cheers when he yanks the noose over her head and tightens the rope around her neck. May God Forgive you. The minister in tones. With that the sheriff's car pulls away hard, and Sarah jerks and the noose, her body emptying itself in one final insult.

00:53:12 Marjorie

The smell of waste. And the smell of sweat are overwhelming. But the deputy doesn't slow as he carries serves body to one of the graves and then turns toward the sharp tongue Susana Martin She's quieter than Sarah, but no less furious and will not confess. She dies for quickly, but not without kicking hard and thence wait until she's invisible. Excuse me. Impossibly still the now friendless Elizabeth How doesn't need to be pushed or lifted into the cart she bent? And since steps awkwardly into it on her own, her hands tied behind her, She looks at her husband's. And for the first time, she is glad that he is blind, that he will not see her die. But she's also determined that he will not hear it. So she just shakes her head when the minister urges her to confess looking at her wide-eyed daughter

one last time, as the noose is pulled over her head by now, the crowd has noticed the unmarked graves. There will be no Christian burial for these lines, which is they turned to watch the

00:54:32 Marjorie

proud Sarah Wild as she's pulled roughly into the cart. She too has seen the graves, but she looks away staring at her only witness, her son, Who's mouthing look at me. So she does, even when the minister tells her to confess even when she refuses staring into her son's eyes. Even as she swings only one more hanging is left. And the crowd words quiet is the elderly and beloved for Becca Nurses lift it carefully into the cart. Will you confess? The minister asks? No, she says, I am as innocent as the Babe unborn her voice trembles, and she looks into the crowd where she can see her husband, her eight children, Their husbands, their wives and some of her grand grandchildren, friends and neighbors are here to confess. They're holding their hats in their hands. They know her from church, holding their hands, holding their hands with each other. This time. The deputy is gentle when he tightens the noose around her neck. Rebecca's shoulders begin to shake, but she barely kicks when she falls

00:55:55 Marjorie

from the cart. And many in the crowd began to cry. Today until the Red Front Cotton Mather stands in the door of his church. And he stared son, speaking at the church, ruins just one block away. It was midnight last night, When a blazing fire had erupted from The Hearth in a nearby Tavern burned through its wooden balls escaped And then brewed on glowing Embers to some 20 other buildings nearby Reverend Mather had disappeared Church, built of wood, and only one straight away from the fire. So he'd written early this morning for going his, his usual bread and cheese and hurried to the church prepared for Destruction. But except for a Sharp smell that permeates the walls, the benches and even the pulpit, the church has been spared. What does it mean? Why would God allow a fire to burn so closely to the church And yet, not harm it? Is it a warming? What great evil is creeping toward him? And his flock? Revered Mather looks to the sky where ashes float like soft, grey snow swirling as the air

00:57:18 Marjorie

is stirred, He can touch taste them, feel them in his throat, his eyes, his lungs. He turns away and enters the church. The ashes will be gone by Sabbath day. He's certain, but the acrid smell will stay." The end.

00:57:40 Peggy

Wow. Turns out the part I heard before was just like, I was just like early days. You went right for the meat. Hmm. So I would love to, you know, invite people. Now, Thank you, Marjorie. That was amazing. I invite people now to unmute. And, you know, feel free to ask. I always just want to know how the hell did you decide to do this? The first of all, I want to say that crying at your own reading is like laughing at your own joke. Really Sorry.

00:58:24 Peggy

I have one son, and it just leaves me. It does. No. But see, that's something incredible too. I mean, it's not like you, even you are bearing witness to a really horrible part of history that we should all still be affected by. So yeah, don't make it so personal about yourself. It should be personal, We should learn from history. So and that's what I think I'm fascinated by how accessible your making it. I think it's brilliant project, But I think you are crazy to take this on. And I think it's amazing. So how? Where? I mean, you're from Maine. Were you raised on this? What?

00:59:15 Marjorie

No, I okay. About five years ago, I had a dream about the Salem witches, and they were huddled in front of me crying and dressed in black. And they wouldn't look at me. But in front of them, there was this super old woman dressed in a long white nightgown with the long white hair saying, please tell them who we are. Just tell them, please, Here we are.

00:59:50 Marjorie

I mean, it was such a dream. I couldn't say no. And so then, yeah. So much research. How have you found all this? Um, I think obsessive-compulsive. I'm searching every book that's ever been published tons of online sites. It's just I've had to immerse myself in every detail, and it's been hard because I have to leave so much out in the telling of it. And that's been one of the biggest challenges is choosing what to include and what to leave out. It's hard, but wasn't for your family to live with you.

01:00:45 Marjorie

They, they, they passed exasperation, and now they run to being bemused, just like I can't help it. I just have to do it. So so they're very supportive, But it took a while. It took a while because, as everyone knows, when you're writing and not being paid for it, it's um, it's a labor of love. So tell people how they can access this. You know. What overall aspirations you have for it? Well, plan was to do a multimedia telling of the story on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Social Media blog. But for reasons that are too complicated to explain here, it blew up on day two. And I had to really win out down. So it's now primarily a Blog and a newsletter with links to them on Facebook and Twitter. So in steering, people just go to TodayInSalem.com, you'll find links in there to go to the newsletter, which I think is a better way to follow the story, Because every day there's stuff coming out. And if you're following the blog, it's easy to fall behind. So if you go to the newsletter,

01:02:18 Marjorie

it goes straight to your inbox. It can build up who cares. And when you have time, you can backtrack and just read to catch up. But start with today and Salem. That's what I've been doing is, you know, I don't read it every day, and I first built in those like, no, this is way more fun for like, you know, when I'm like, when I've got time. So it's just it's too much to do, Do every day. Yeah, Well, you do it, but.

01:02:48 Peggy

But no, so get to the newsletter. If you can. I still want you know, I still really want to link you up with... Like I can't believe that they haven't invited you to do this on the East Coast yet. Or have they?

01:03:02 Marjorie

No, they haven't. But I haven't exactly been knocking on doors. So I think it's like any writer, The act of writing. It's really different from active promoting. And it's hard to hard to cross that line for you, especially when you're doing sort of an everyday thing. So how far do you see it going? Well, it's scheduled to end on Halloween, Ironically, I know that's not deeply unpropitious, But it is where a big face one ends. There's another big Phase 2 that goes on until May 12th. But I'm electing to do that in a future project. So so for now, the story will be told through the end of October,

01:03:52 Marjorie

I'm going to try and, you know, promote this to my cohort, as we say in Topsfield, which has a somewhat vested interest for people there, Like they're people in the story from Topsfield, when I first like reconnect with Marjorie and told her I was from Topsfield in Europe, there's just like it just so happens. But tomorrow, this shit is really going to hit the fan

01:04:23 Marjorie

out there people. Yeah, Yeah, for sure. So I just think what you're doing is, well, all of you, all the readers tonight. So interesting and so inspiring to people, to realize the diversity of experience and what you can do, whether it's linking history and making it for now, or, you know, a movie that your mother was obsessed with when she was, you know, young, which is Malina's case... but it's just it's just fascinating.

01:04:58 Peggy

I hope everybody realizes that even if they're not telling their stories right away, how important they are. All right. Well, I will turn off the recording case that's making people shy Is has been a really fascinating evening. And when I've been looking forward ever since I saw Margorie and Malina at in April, I was like, hey, you guys need to come with me. So I'm going to stop the recording. And I look forward to, I hope, seeing many of you next month, when we will have Erica Barmyster, our other Hedgebrooke person that time. Juda Skillman and Mary

01:05:42 Peggy

Eugene Lord who is, I think she just turned 90 and her... her family was very involved in the civil rights movement. And she realized that maybe that might be of interest. So I perhaps erroneously claimed that, you know, when she was a reading with John Lewis at John Lewis said, Marjorie there, Mary Jane. Hey. So, but her, her husband, you know, went to the South during that time and sent letters home. So it should be another great evening. Thank you all for attending and off goes the recording.