



# Library podcast

## Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series #392

### 00:00:01 Peggy

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to reading 392 of the It's About Time Writers' Reading series. This series was founded by Esther Atrel Healthgot and dedicated the memory of Anna Healthgot, her mother, who began writing at age 70, and to the memory of Nelson Bentley, the quintessential teacher who gave Anna and scores of others help and hope. It's About Time is dedicated to an end of racism, homophobia, antisemitism, homelessness and war. I'm very happy to welcome three readers tonight, two of whom are new to me, which is always exciting, and also to an extended invitation to all of you, whether you're a repeat visitor tonight or a first time visitor, to know that new and experienced voices are always welcome here and see It's About Time Writers' Reading series. This event is being recorded and it will be available within a matter of days on the It's About Time YouTube channel. In addition, the recording will be on The Seattle Public Library podcast section, and if you go to The Seattle Public Library and search podcasts, you can see ones that are dating back about a year and a half. Now, there's a slightly longer lag time on the podcast, so that won't be available immediately. However, you'll be able to share the YouTube reading in just a matter of a few days. So welcome to everyone. Very excited to have these three readers here tonight and each of the open mic people who let me know so far. So the first person I'd like to welcome is Suzanne Edison. Suzanne Edison writes often, but not exclusively, about the intersection of illness, healing, and medicine. Her first full length book, "Since the House Is Burning", was published by MoonPath Press in 2022. Her chapbook, "The Body Lives Its Undoing", was published by Benaroya Research Institute in 2018. Poetry can be found in: Bracken, Whale Road Review, Mom Egg Review, Michigan Quarterly Review; JAMA; HEAL; Persimmon Tree; SWWIM; Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine; and elsewhere. Her work can be found in several anthologies including: "Face to Face: Women Writers on Faith", "Mysticism and Awakening" and "The Healing Art of Writing, Volume One". Suzanne is a Hedgebrook 2019 alum and teaches writing workshops through UCSF Chronic Illness Center in San Francisco and at Richard Hugo House in Seattle, where she lives with her husband and two cats. Welcome, Suzanne.

### 00:02:55 Suzanne

Thank you. I'm going to read from "Since the House is Burning." Since the House is Burning. the title is from an Italian proverb that my late father in law apparently said. The other half of that is, since the house is burning, let us warm ourselves. And the book is about all kinds of burning. Burning in the side of the body through inflammation, burning of our forests, as you are well aware of our planet and our political world in Arrears, I think, in burning, parts of it burning down. And so what do we do to

continue to live in spite of the burning? And I feel like that is the question. The first poem I'm going to read is called "Oh, America." Some of the words come from America the Beautiful, but it's from the Ray Charles version of the song, so you may or may not be familiar with that. "America as a girl I was told to keep it down. My words crushed like cigarettes hear now my clacking teeth this pecked grain of tongue bitten no longer held, wanting a refrain to circle the caged children, the ones, oh beautiful who dared for spacious skies they cannot yet see. I think of my brown daughter, us white parents and I say hear my fury, flagrant and foaming chanting with others in liberating strife my feet calloused for justice and rights aged, I continue who's to bear my earth and fire purple mountain majesties spitting and hissing as I say hands off my body, his body, her body too. I'd rather be still as a crane patient listening but without butrest whales of resistance silence colonizes and mummified oh, I hear new currents collective chemistries of heat and time once again a freedom beat oh, render a clearing uphold the liberty and law for those like my daughter at the ark of their days bend from sea to shining sea."

**00:05:42 Suzanne**

This next one is sort of an elegy. It's called "Seaside Vacation with the Dead." "Maybe it is the shriveled spiders on the rug at the cliff house, long dead and trapped inside, looking like tiny hot air balloons that tell me these beasts were fornicating and feasting more than I. Maybe it is the scraping sound of sowbug shells sucked up and spinning in the vacuum I employ that reminds me of the Asian lady beetle carapaces dozens scattered on my dining table that greeted me years ago. Then my mother had been dead less than a day, and I was not there to feed her ice chips, soothe, rattle and wheeze or shroud with my body the carcass of her last breath. My memory opens like a flash of flesh. I watch evening hug the swelling redbud limbs as bats drain the air of insects. But I am not here to grieve. I want to know about the living to come, how to navigate by scent, how the tree grows around a nail into which its point has bitten."

**00:07:21 Suzanne**

Some of you know that I have a daughter who was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease when she was quite young. She was sick from about the time she was four to 14. In and out of hospitals quite a lot, lots and lots of medicine. She is in remission. She's 21 and she's doing pretty well, but there's no cure for her illness. However, she's off all medicine, like I said. And this poem was written after her remission called "After Remission, Her First Tattoo." "It wasn't the needles or punctured skin raditad and repeat that surprised me. She'd had years of infusions. It wasn't the ink like an ant trail of dark blood, nothing we hadn't both seen in the vials siphoned monthly like crude oil from shale that often sputtered or refused to flow. It was the location she chose. Familiar bench of her left inner arm, exposed and soft as morning haze, where once tubes were tied above her bulbous vein. And the image in Roman numerals they're heft like those carved on a tombstone, engraved on a sundial or a gold coin, a code one must decipher, something a future lover will rub his finger over or kiss. The tattoo inscribed today marks an expiration to the platoons of bottles. Pills lined up dutiful as soldiers marks four years since the nat swarm of her rash and weakness finally lay dormant like larvae in winter. And my gift is forgetting the phlebotomist name that I once knew by heart."

**00:09:38 Suzanne**

So when we were often in the hospital, we would be in an infusion center for hematology oncology. And so we saw lots and lots of kids with cancer and oftentimes both parents. And this is one more about what it's like to have a child. You're trying to understand what's going on. And this one was published in the "Mameg Review." It's called "Lines Drawn in their Son's Brain." "The tumor is still growing. Both agree the hair is shaven and the slice up the skull was needed. But they argue. The woman says it's a seam. The man says, a weld. The woman rips out threads from her sampler, repairing the motto, there's no place like Harm, and says, it's stitched. The man paces, glances at the soundless TV. A home show. The boy is not watching. It's stapled. Not natural, he says in the oncology treatment room, unlike astronomers who can't see dark matter yet study its effects, they both see the clear patch holding his IV needle in place. They see his eyelids, sheer and vein like blinds draping a waning window. And the boy, he is wondering if his parents like dogs, if they will adopt one from the pound or wait for a puppy. He hopes the dog will love sticks jump for them in mid air. He thinks he'd like to be that stick, thrown and returned over and over. What else will they do? When he is dead, he hears his mother say, his hair will grow back. Hears his father say, I need to spackle the hole I kicked in his bedroom wall."

**00:11:59 Suzanne**

Yeah. So one of the things I did when I was in grad school was I did a project looking at art in hospitals in Seattle and the University of Washington Swedish Hospital and Harborview have these amazing visual art collections. Some of them are paintings, some of them are ceramics, some of them are textiles. They're glass. Just amazing collections. And so I wanted to look at what was the purpose of art in hospital situations. And many of you will know what ecrassus poetry is. It's a poem in response to some kind of art, either visual art or music or dance. And so in this case, this is a poem in response to a piece of art in one of the clinics. It's called "In the Radiology Waiting Room." "No store bought prints of seascapes. Rather, I investigate the insides of glass boxes hanging on the walls. Sheep guts, the plaque tells me, stretch to look like skin. I am transfixed by a pair of gloves, hollow and painted blue and gold. No patients in the clinic's room look up their heads bent to screens or frayed magazines. Yet one woman, almost swallowed by a redsirappi hunched in her wheelchair, eyes me sideways as I photograph the notes hidden in the gloves. Wrinkled palms lend a hand. My time is at hand. Given the unknown results, the possible positive shadow, I think in case of emergency, break glass. What if I did grab the gloves, crack the wall of dull air, the patient silence, slip them onto my hands and touch the woman waiting?"

**00:14:16 Suzanne**

And then, on a little bit lighter note, I still have time. Right, Peggy? Have one more. Okay. My last poem is actually the first poem in the book. Here's a picture of the book. It's called "We Should Not Wait for Fruit." "Once I lived with my lover in the hyperbole of petals and penumbra, ravenous as termites and the flickers who mined them. We bent to each other as if to salt licks and lived in gauzy oblivion, to nightly siren sweeps and the morning cavalcade of crows. We erupted like avalanche lilies through snow profuse skimping at nothing, decades now pass the verge of vernal a cane by the bed. You press your cottony head towards mine and like a sav, pour out an unearthed story about a wounded dog found in weeds you carried home it's. Then I melt towards you, believing I taste grass

on your lips. Sip of bitter and bright as we roll over, find our sway and let gravity take us deeper, drunk as bees in fuchsia." Thank you.

**00:15:54 Peggy**

Thank you. Yeah, I think I did hear some clapping. We could have an unmute so people could clap. It's very nice. So our next reader tonight actually our open mic person is Amanda Park.

**00:16:15 Amanda**

Thank you for hosting, Peggy, and Suzanne thank you for sharing your gorgeous poems. Really moving as a mother, really moving poetry. I'm really excited to check out your collection. My name's Amanda. I'm a poet. I have two books of poetry coming out next year, and I will throw a link to my website and some published poems in the chat after I'm done reading, if anyone's interested. The first poem I'm reading tonight is called "Unknowing." "Even horses know they are just horses, even goals, no distinction from falling, even force know how to disturb lose daughters from its fields, their sudden light. Even I know the worst thing. The door broken from both sides by dust and lightning. I know the worst thing. Light creeps in. And here, if you stare too long at pistol and petal unripe fruit photos of lovers before you swarmed into their bodies waving match sticks. What's to see except the greed and fire in your own heart beating against wind? That unknowing monster we call heart."

**00:17:29 Amanda**

The second home for tonight and the final one for me is called "California Without Makeup." I wrote a lot in my first collection about marriage and motherhood, and this is one of the keystones of that collection. "I do see the woman to the future. The cake. How is one cut but she looks icing from ringed finger not knowing black seeds don't take in the garden or root and champagne and armpits the place. She does not see the warm bodies buried in pine needles and down who kill for their young but begins hearing them flee at night and finds their fur and puts tufts in her mouth as if she too carries a child. One promise of heat and time is incandescence. Another droughts and warm months. A dry wind will come inside the house, testing doors. When the bedroom catches fire, she wakes like a little mission town abandoned in Armchills." Thank you.

**00:18:34 Peggy**

Thank you so much. I'm trying to think. Have you been here before? No. Oh, dear. I must have seen you somewhere else, I feel like. Oh, I did the monthly roundtable where we read that we enjoyed wonderful. Okay, well, please do contact me or put your information in a chat so that we can schedule you for a longer time. So glad you're here tonight. Thank you. The next person I'm going to introduce is Brenda.

**00:19:09 Brenda**

Thank you for asking me, Peggy.

**00:19:11 Peggy**

Sure. Brenda Asterino lives on Lopez Island, Washington. She worked as a private and public educator for nearly twenty-five years when life was forever changed by a car accident. Her education

includes an AA in Humanities, BS in Biology, and MA in Education, along with many years of training in parapsychology, Energy Work and Body Work. Welcome, Brenda.

**00:19:36 Brenda**

Thank you. "Pathway Walking Through Creation." This is a collection of about 90 of my poems. Over 70 of them have never been published before this book. I have a dedication I'll remark on just for a second, to all those who studied that which is about their feet and to those who gaze at the stars, never stop reaching out to each other. And I like to comment that I live on the ancestral lands and waters of the coast salish people who've called this place home since time immemorial. I pledge to work for reconciliation and regret the harm done to them by the settler culture. This is a myriad of topics in my poem, so I'm going to try to hit at least some of the topics. You heard that one of my degrees is in biology. And biology was probably my first love. My daughter doesn't believe me when I tell her that when I was growing up there were hordes of butterflies wherever I was and it wasn't uncommon to see dozens of them at a time. When she didn't believe me and still doesn't believe me, I wrote this poem "Winged Blessings." "I remember butterflies, dozens on an August evening dropping on the warm concrete before the gingerbread front porch. I was ten or twelve years old and with quiet, gentle movement a humble eye would join them, bowing and supplication tiny feet did grace my arms, befriend my shoulder, kissed my hair fragile brown orange flutters were experienced now gone."

**00:22:12 Brenda**

I think it's so important and I want you to know an honor it is to be in this group. It's real quick and easy to sense the strength of the women here. So here is one of my poems entitled "What Glory? The Nature of Woman." And I start out with a metaphor. "Like in shadowing accentuating as green multiplies on dull gray bark and skipping across to the tops of the cliffs of the carved expansion, changing size and shape with growth and age always giving, providing food or sheltering for other life. Women, like those trees that never stop changing, are always expanding, renewing in different ways. The ultimate betrayal of ego is to give over to life. As with raw clay. The potential is the ultimate goal and maybe why the feminine was worshipped so very long ago without submitting to life there is only death inside the skin building walls within and without our lives and in regard to our influence in the lives of others. Women are the juxtaposition that flexibility of change. Of hard and soft. Sweet and salty. Give and take what glory to be born a woman."

**00:24:11 Brenda**

Here's another one. After my car accident I got into energy work because I was having trouble with the medications they were given me to help me heal. And I found that the energy work was very helpful to me and was like a softer, gentler type of medicine in some ways. So in the regard of a slight disclaimer, I'm not a teacher, I have no curriculum. But many of my poems reflect the things I've experienced and that others have experienced and shared with me. So when I use the word heal in the second line I'm talking heal from another time. "Dazzle me, call to me, break me to heal break loose from the snare what else can I feel? Shadows move with me release them to ground as time opens up for love to abound the center of spiral is with us right now long time ago cut off at my knees broke all our minds as they killed off the bees circle of my hand. Roll of my hips flow forth the love

from my heart with a kiss nothing is lost. Wholeness is gained as the power from feet rises again so twirl and swirl dance through the dream to knit up the time so we all can be seen sweep out the cobwebs ache lose the pain sing praise to all goodness without any shame. The dance never stops, the dance never slows. We might change the beat, but never the heat."

**00:26:36 Brenda**

So I wrote a book a few years ago about my journey through brain injury, and because I'm on teacher's retirement, because of the accident, they made me take my book down. So here's a couple of the poems from that book, okay? "Undefined traumatic brain injury, continuing care, hospital bed growing anxiety when mind has any clarity repeating need to check purse to handle makeup, send for the nurse unable to be erect or walk the space to make the 20th search for mirror, lipstick, mascara feeling through every pocket over and over again gone with the rolls of the car finding only shattered glass. Makeup gone. Anxiety grows as if face cannot be defined without it filling up with confusion. Not knowing yet that my life is no longer defined. I, who is known to me, who is no longer sometimes it's okay to get your life not defined because then you get to define it yourself. So this other one was from the same book. It's called a startle with the word startle, like something that shakes you up a little bit, only slightly. What star did you come from? Or did the star come to you? Was it a spark of awareness? Was it a lightning bolt? Did your inner sight enlighten you? Did the enlightenment grow to inner sight? Are you a five pointed star awakening changing to new Earth awareness? Are you a six pointed star balancing and spinning into integration? Were you startled into recognition of who you are and who you want to be? Are your golden feathers illuminated by the star that shines from your single eye? Does your mind perceive your brilliant worth?"

**00:29:37 Brenda**

When I lived in Ohio and taught in the public school system, once, I was hired to a job so that I would help look at different teachers practicing strategies because there was suspicion around some of the teachers. I learned a lot from that. And after taking care of my mother during her final years of life and resorting to nursing home care the last few months because I was getting sick from taking care of her, I became more aware of the profit that's put before people and power that's put before people. Living on an island in the Pacific Northwest. I also came up against this again or had it confronted with me. And wherever there are tourists, there's corrupt types of power and profit making behavior. So I'm warning you that I'm going to read a poem about child trafficking in case anyone wants to turn me off for the next minute or two that way. "Child trafficking. She cries, she dies a little more each day, a little more each time the man touches her that way and some hope chokes. He runs, he fights as young as seven stare. His toys are left behind, forced beyond what he can bear with loss of mind. They buy, they sell while owning all they can and owning

**00:31:40 Brenda**

people too, as part of the power plan. Because no one tells. She's old and bold. She speaks to what she sees is choosing not to hear bullies knock her to her knees who counts the tears? He smiles, he speaks he's learned to act apart still twisting from his pain somewhere he lost his heart the pain is bad it runs from mind to soul swaddles in her core spirit reaches to be whole there is no protection no justice can be seen and upon reflection why can't we hear the scream?"

**00:32:38 Brenda**

I'm going to switch to a little more upbeat one. I can find her real quick. "When do you find peace of mind? Bring it forth to be bring it like a light that shines for every heart that's free bring it here. Bring it now. Make it loud and long clearly sing to every soul the true eternal song." One of the things that when I tried to understand why our world is the way it is and I became an observer and it sometimes led to me being more reflective about what was going on in my own life. But here's a poem from "Observations of the Way." "Sometimes women because their voices aren't always heard or perhaps it's better to say rarely heard. Sometimes these kinds of things happen and it's called Tragedy for Two. She seems so discontented. She feels tragic more than fragile. She remembers her father while excusing his actions. She wants it to be so, so badly she lost her way. He put his heavy burden on her slender shoulders. Now she tries to carry other burdens, hoping again to see her father, to be in his presence, writing a story, fiction. When it gets too heavy, she strikes out at others, especially those who love her and will stand by her when she suffers the most. She suffers for one who never was. She will blame them for her injury like her father did to her. She won't drop her burden. She won't stop her suffering. That way of being is the only thing in her life, the only part of her actions she knows are real."

**00:35:20 Peggy**

Thank you, Brenda. Did you want to do one last one? Okay.

**00:35:29 Peggy**

This one is called "Fairy Music 3-D." "I ride the fairy a lot to get to land. Frothy white caps breaking surface as whipped cream crests strain and penetrate from out of the blue. Green moments arrange the sequence of break and bubble, peak and shadow. We slide on top while worlds contrive below, unaware or uncaring of islands. It is an atmosphere of liquid domination of earthly matter and not music is apparent. Quarter notes play out among half notes, staccato and allegro. Most days there is no crescendo, so we think the ocean is silent, but it continually sings."

**00:36:41 Peggy**

Thank you. Well, how's that for a perfect final line, "it continually sings." Thank you so much. I'm so glad you are finally able to join us, that you found us here. Okay, we are now going to hear from our next open mic reader, Sylvia Pollock.

**00:37:04 Sylvia**

This is going to be a real change of pace from what we were just listening to with Brenda. This is on the silly side. And in response to something I just got online, telling me more about myself because of 23 and me. So this is called "Predisposition." "Apparently my propensity for hanging on to things what 23 AND ME calls difficulty discarding. Rarely used possessions can be laid at the feet of my knee androthol ancestors, although their DNA comprises less than 2% of my genome. It's sticky stuff. Makes me adhere to old books, ticket stubs, playbills, moth riddled sweaters, shoes that no longer fit. Perhaps these inherited genetic bits also explaining why I collect rocks, shells, solid old things, remnants of times past. And then there's my collection of dragons. Sewn, stuffed, ceramic, painted,

carved. Does some neanderthal part of me yearn for a time when dragons roam. Marvelous to think that genetic analysis can detect neanderthal linked characteristics, including that I am, quote, less likely to sneeze with a full stomach. But why was that trait selected for disneyses provoked dragons? Thanks.

**00:38:57 Peggy**

There's a dragon over your shoulder.

**00:39:01 Sylvia**

At least one, yeah. My room is full of dragons.

**00:39:06 Peggy**

I'm realizing I've never seen that room. Next time I met your house, I want to see the dragon. Next time we'll go upstairs here to my study. Absolutely. Thank you. I'm so glad you joined us tonight. Our next reader for tonight, our featured reader is Cindy Veach. I hope I said your name right. I should have asked. Thank you. Who I now understand I'll be listening to. See if I hear any, like, east coast in your writing. Or have you already assimilated? Okay. Cindy Veach is the author of "Her Kind" (CavanKerry Press) a finalist for the 2022 Eric Hoffer Montaigne Medal, "Gloved Against Blood" (CavanKerry Press), a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize and Massachusetts Center for the Book 'Must Read,' and the chapbook, "Innocents" (Nixes Mate). Her poems have appeared in the Academy of American Poets Poem-a-Day, AGNI, Michigan Quarterly Review, Poet Lore and Salamander among others. She is the recipient of the Philip Booth Poetry Prize and the Samuel Allen Washington Prize. Cindy is co-poetry editor of MER. Welcome.

**00:40:33 Cindy**

Thank you. Thank you for having me. It's lovely to be here. I'm going to read tonight for my new collection, "Her Kind," which, speaking of the east coast, is themed around the Salem witch trials. I lived in the Salem area for 30 years, and around 30 years, this book began with the desire to counter the Salems Witch kitchen narrative by writing poems about the victims. But during the time I was writing those poems, I was also experiencing the end of a long marriage, and Donald Trump was elected president so my vision for the book evolved. It became more complicated because I felt that it needed to connect the history of the witch trials with contemporary events that were both personal and political. Some of the poems incorporate verbatim texts from the trial documents, which you may be able to hear as I read they are italicizing the book. The first poem I'm going to read is called Reasons You Might Have Been accused of being a Witch in 1692. And it is basically a found poem based on an article by Lara Rutherford Morrison from the bustle that was called "Would You Have Been called a Witch in Salem?" "Reasons, you might have been accused of being a witch in 1692. You are a woman, you are middle aged. You have an extra nipple mold freckle, or basically any other mark on your body. You stumble over your words. You have an extra nipple mole freckle. When asked to say a prayer, you stumble over the words you are married but don't have children. When asked to say a prayer you are the envy of other people. You are married but don't have enough children. You associate with someone suspected of witchcraft. You are the envy of other people, you are perceived as bitchy. You associate with someone suspected of witchcraft your milk spoiled. You

are perceived as bitchy, you are of low status. Your milk spoiled. Or anything vaguely negative that happened to or around you. You are of low status, you have any mark on your body, your milk spoiled. You are a woman, you are middle aged. Spectral evidence was the type of testimony in which the witness could claim that the accused had appeared to them and don't harm to them in a dream or in a vision, so not that the person himself was ever actually present. And this was allowed in the courts during Salem witch travels. Spectral evidence because she said she saw and therefore these pinholes in her skin, on one arm, to be exact. Look how they crisscross. Makes a doily of the flesh. And because she said she saw you not you take a small pin from your pocket, a straight pin with a flat head. And because she said it was therefore you therefore not a dream, puncturing each pore you and the flesh, not flesh, with a common pin. So 14 of the 20 victims of the witch trials were women, and many were accused because they had stepped outside of church and norms, and often through no fault of their own. So the next two poems I will read our victim homes. And there is one victim home for each of the female victims in her kind. Elizabeth, how of sorrows. Elizabeth Howe's husband was blind, and so Elizabeth had to take over running the farm. I had to be my husband's eyes, the light that could not reach them, leading them about by the hand tilling the land my father gave me running the. Household and for this they would not let me come into the Church of Ipswich. And for this they said I be which torses cows sows, and was the cause of sorrows that killed the pearly little Hannah? No, never in all my life I saw I had to be the husband eyes, mouth, muscle, and took the lead and hanged for it."

#### **00:45:21 Cindy**

The title of this next poem is taken from something that Donald Trump said. And there are other poems in the book that are also taking their title from quotes from Trump. "Trump has called the investigation a witch hunt 84 times. Martha Carrier. Hanged August 19, 1692. They said she brought smallpox to handover. They said she killed her father and brother, making her a queen in hell. Aka landowner. Neighbors testified it was none other than Goodie Carrier who haunted them at night. They said she bit Susheldon, threatening to cut her throat because she wanted her to sign the book she stuck a pin in dumb and Putnam killed Samuel Preston's Cow for being very lusty. And there was that devil man whispering in her ear. Somehow she caused the death of Alan Toothsaker's Cat for these complaints, though each one was a lie. She was condemned by the grace of God to die. I wish so what if I woke up changed? It's not like I'm a wild hog or some evil thing. Not a real hog that follows you home, jumps into the window. A monkey with cock's, feet with claws. Don't believe what my accuser says or believe it. The fact is, my divorce attorney's building sits on the side of the prison where they kept the accused and changed in. I came there with a silk scarf worn loosely at the neck, borders looped with colored thread. He came with daisies dark chocolate and proclaimed my wife came towards me and found fault with me downstairs in the dungeon. They've chained us to the walls to keep our spirit from escaping in the likeness of a bird. Tornado warning. When I think about it now, I am fearless. But sometimes I still hear the minivan coming back from Iowa City, that two lane highway with too many white crosses. Troopers flagging us down, ordering us to lie belly down the ditch. Iowa sky. Imperial sky. Every spiny tendril that drops from a dark cloud reminds me of the bed fear made. Silence meant trouble, a bruin. I prayed for thunder. I welcomed the cackle of lightning rages, yelling matches. But a sudden drop in pressure, the sucking out of sound. I got good at seeing it coming. Sky purpling moving over our house. Our house slanting into shadow. I went down to the

cellar to weather each storm. Tornadoes are cool, of course I had to leave him. I filed for divorce and sundry other acts of witchcraft. Therefore I am the earthquake and its tectonic plate. A rock chucked into a languid lake. I am the headache that keeps you awake an unexpected snake at the end of the rake. A rock tossed into a placid lake. I am the shake that rattles the gate and the faux pas that deflates the cake. A rock dropped into a flat lake. I am a plague outbreak, the thirst you can't slake. A rock flung into a tranquil lake and the rip into something opaque. I am the damn stake in the landscape, the fire break that forsakes a rock cast into a still lake. The mean old drake, the keepsake that's fake. A rock hurled into a serene lake the cause of your toothache and the failed windbreak, every mistake. A rock pitched into a quiet lake. I am the one to hate no one's namesake the earthquake and it's tectonic plate."

**00:49:49 Cindy**

So two more poems. "A woman climbed Statue of Liberty in protest. Theresa Patricia Cumul convicted trespassing 2018 she said, I climbed to protest our nation's zero tolerance immigration policy. She said, I climbed to Abolish ICE. They said trespasser. They said disorderly conduct. When she sat on the skirts of Lady Liberty we watched them climb after her. They said, Get down. Our hero said, I'm not discouraged. She made her bed and we watched and cheered and put a curse on those who wanted to arrest her for protesting putting children into cages. Oh, yes, we witches watched her carry our truth up and over that ledge like a beautiful soup. Fair, strong and live. Goodbye, dark ages. We climb with her. We climb with her. Last home is called Ayahkati and Hakari was a Greek goddess of crossroads. She ruled over the night, magic and places where three roads meet. She is described as having three heads, three animal heads. Daw, the serpent, the horse and sometimes other animal combinations between queen, Liminal, sorceress, crossroads, guardian. Story of my life. Who are you today? My ex wife, Taunt. More than just a Gemini, a trimorphus human form and triplicate. Birth, love, death, maiden, mother, chrome, moon, earth, underworld. I'll take triplicity over Duplicity any day. Three heads are better, even if one has to be a dog, a bitch dog, dog, serpent, horse, dog, cow, boar. Even if it means I am which that old crone at the cauldron stirring, willow, dark, you black thorn. It took a torch, a key, a dagger to cut away the path. It took 30 years. It took all three of me." Thank you so much. Thank you.

**00:52:17 Peggy**

Thank you, Cindy. That was fascinating.

**00:52:24 Cindy**

When my family moved there the first night, we spent the night in Salem. So you have this sense of what was a witch hunt only in name, in terms of the discrimination. And I'd love to take this opportunity to call all of your attention and to make you familiar with a reading that was from August 2021 by Marjorie Osterhot, which would be also on the podcast. Marjorie felt that the women in particular who were put to death came to her in a dream and said, you have to tell our story. And she became obsessed for years and produced this sort of daily writing. It was called Today in Salem, telling the stories from the point of view and to hear those both sides, you guys should go on tour together. It would be a wonderful, amazing because likewise, she was also influenced by what was happening politically, and she would include things about what Incarceration was like and how you

might be dead, but you still your family could owe for the time that you were incarcerated or changed. They were charging for it. So it's been fascinating.

**00:53:49 Peggy**

So I'm really looking forward, along with all of the works here tonight to reading more and very rich. He's my neighbor too, Cindy, so I can walk you over there.

**00:54:01 Cindy**

Oh, that would be great.

**00:54:02 Peggy**

Yeah. Well, you know, Salem is selling makes their living, really by sort of the kitschy side of the witch trials. It's all about Halloween and witch. I know. Isn't it so bizarre? Do witch statue in the middle of town and it's all fun. But sometimes I know that when I met I had known Marjorie before and I remed her again at Hedgebrook and I said I was from Topsfield. She goes, Tomorrow's a big day. She goes, the shit is really going to hit the fan in Topsfield tomorrow. It's like one of the first people who to be accused. So it's fascinating. Thank you so much. Donna James. Donna will be reading she's going to read her open mic tonight, but she'll be reading for a longer period as a featured reader next month. Always the second Thursday. Just don't ask me to always tell you what the date is. Look it up. All right, Donna.

**00:55:03 Donna**

Thank you. Two short poems, which is about all I write these days. "Shred. Eleven years life measured in bills, canceled checks, receipts, statements, registers, tax preps fed into Jaws find toothed designed to dismantle the paper trail of the ceaseless energy of commerce captured in accordion files. The whole busy world of buy and sell. Proof of purchase, receipt for a plot, its current tenant a body dismantled all but bones in a short five years, bought for \$5.27 a square foot. Goods long recycled to Goodwill or landfill and prayer. Facebook, coffee, date, instagram email your bosses demands, your child's insistence. The latest puzzle craze keeping up with the news in a Hindu house. You would escape to a prayer room undisturbed dive into your innards. You would pour your soul into vivid red and blue vishnu on the wall or confront what the hell your life's about in a spiral into the sacred chamber of a nearby temple. You would hear distonic clatter of instruments and clash of voices you'd pay a pouch to to keep the demons out. You would be unable to hear your phone." Thanks.

**00:56:50 Peggy**

Okay. What an evening. I can actually tell you when we're next meeting. So on August 11. It's About Time. And as I mentioned, we're staying online for now. So for example, this evening I'm coming to you live from the Lilac City and it has been such a joy to be able to have participants from all over the United States as well as sometimes other countries as well joining us and to have been able to make them available after the fact. So look for the it's about YouTube, check out all the previous podcasts and I will also retain the chat so that if anybody has any questions about where to get the authors works or how to find them.