in pursuit of magic
Artspeak/From Page to Performance

Artspeak/From Page to Performance meets each monthly on 2nd Saturdays. This generative workshop is partially funded by Poets & Writers and Blue Door Art Center.

Host Golda Solomon, Poet-in-Residence and co-host Jacqui Reason lead a supportive community of writers in exploring poetry, music and art as both teachers and learners.

“We are all artists. We are all writers. We are all poets.” Golda Solomon
Dear Readers

As one of my favorite blues singer, Etta James delivered, “At Last,” we are ready with Issue #2 of the Community Writing Project Journal. The overwhelming response to our submission call was delightful. Thank to all of you who gave generously with words and art.

Special recognition to ArtSpeak/From Page to Performance participants who continue to regularly submit and support our efforts. A super special thanks to Marcia Klein, Grant Explorer for the CWPJ.

She pointed us in the direction of Arts Westchester. All writers from our premiere issue will be represented in their Spring Exhibition -projects that were initiated during the pandemic.

This issue is dedicated to my colleague at Borough of Manhattan Community College Robert Lapides my first editor, who recently passed away.

He saw my potential. “You can talk Golda; how about writing down some of your stories.”

I am still talking and writing.

We are proud to introduce a new section, ‘Kidz Roar/Raw, unedited contributions from young writers and artists. Our youngest writer is 14 and our youngest artist, four.

Enjoy our labor of love,
golda
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Dedication

On January 1, 2021, Robert Lapides, professor emeritus in the English Department, husband of my colleague Professor Diane Dowling transitioned.

“At BMCC for 50 years, Professor Lapides will be remembered for his passion, his life-long fight for social, economic, and racial justice, and his commitment to building communities where differences can be expressed.”

His legacy can be found in his influence on the many students and colleagues he worked with, the online communities he created, in his BMCC faculty magazine Hudson River, and for editing Lodz Ghetto, collected writings left behind by Jews confined to the Lodz Ghetto in WWII.

Until the end, he was working on his book about the creative development of Charles Dickens, which will be published posthumously.”

Tzu Wen Cheng

Chairman, Speech, Theatre, Communications Department

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Dawning Prayer

May the umbrage of the past year be replaced by freshened air
sun baked colors
spirited attempt to align crucial change
on a weakened world

A new dawn is rapidly approaching
Tony Mitchelson

Photo: Tony Mitchelson
Poesía líquida entra
en la garganta,
un sonido luminoso
toca los labios,
brilla como beso eterno.

Destellantes giros del agua,
ensortijan el sonido
en la espuma,
sílabas líquidas
en la ausencia.

Liquid poetry enters
the throat,
a luminous sound
touches the lips,
shining like an eternal kiss.

Shimmering whirlpools of water
bejewel sound
in the foam,
liquid syllables
in the absence.
Looking for America
Marcia Klein

Traveling by bus with a friend
Learn about Americans
with different customs
values, unlike ours

Cars on the road
Glitzy 60’s autos
Chrome, fancy tail fins
Sedate station wagons

Protesters in public parks
Uninhibited, sensitive,
Flower children,
Hippies, beatniks

Old friends  years later
Sitting on a park bench
Watching peaceful protesters

Surrounded by militants
Carrying weapons carefully
Pointed at them

Americans divided  divisive
Unite, become inclusive
I take away your independence
Decide what you can and cannot do
You have no choice
But to be obedient

I control your life
Ignore pandemics

Make you vulnerable
To contagious diseases

I control your body
No abortion for you

Select your career
Decide where you live

Take away your freedom
Give you no choice

I am omnipotent
You don’t have to like me
People are powerless
Until I am defeated
I am the law!
What Comes Next
Nora Freeman

WHAT CAME BEFORE, OR THE BLACK EXPERIENCE AS TOLD IN ONE PAGE WITH MANY OMISSIONS BY A WHITE PERSON
abduction
death march to the coast
waiting in dungeons for the dreaded unknown
the middle passage
for the survivors: arrival in the “new world”
the auction block
money changes hands
work from dawn to dusk
work to exhaustion
work unpaid for centuries
random violence
resistance: the underground railroad, escape, rebellion

A MOMENT OF HOPE
emancipation! freedom!
a few years of federal troops protecting rights
40 acres and a mule … whoops!
america gets bored and federal troops leave, no acres, no mule
jim crow takes over
sharecropping
lynchings

A MOMENT OF HOPE
brown v. board of education
redlining
private “academies”
rise of the “suburbs”
16th street baptist church bombing
segregation now, segregation tamorra, segregation foreva

A MOMENT OF HOPE
civil rights act
voting rights act
freedom summer

deaths of james chaney, andrew goodman, michael schwerner
assassinations of martin luther king malcolm x
1968 election
southern strategy, law and order, silent majority
A MOMENT OF HOPE
black power!
black panthers
DIY free breakfast program for kids
war on drugs
war on crime
war on the poor
mass incarceration
school to prison pipeline
random humiliations and lynchings by cops
a long list of mournful names
children arrested by cops in school for scribbling on
desks, crying
A MOMENT OF HOPE
president obama
the beer summit
obamacare
civil rights division enforces the law
rise of the terrifying orangeman
make america great again
um when exactly was america great
2 more mournful names: george floyd and breonna taylor
America suddenly notices that black lives matter:
a moment of hope, or another new variation on the old
theme?

For Glück Confessions and Matins
These are warring impulses, these
hug her neck till she's warm with
hope and no false premises but
a window open to next steps, the
self she’s coveted not courted.

These are slippery, her muses, benign
but indifferent yet
“You’ll not make us as one” they warn and
“Make no mistake---you’re on your own.”
What Comes Next: 
*Pandemic Month Six*

Deborah Maier

A struggle with pixels, with paper with poems
A service to soil to seedlings to greens.
A watch on a nest, on some nibbles, on newness
A fear for some fledglings, for the Permafrost, the future,
A trudge up a mountain of shredding detritus.
Two tries at humility, three failures at quiet,
For these days are long and emotions range wide.
What’s next is the melding of dreams and the mundane:
life larger, inverted as in raindrops suspended.

Until We are Free

*For Nina Simone- I wish I knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*

Deborah Maier

Until we are free—all of us—
while children grow tortured spines
bearing loads two bricks larger each birthday,
while
girls are disfigured, robbed of
body-joy under the rubric of
*but that's their culture!*
—when white-coats and switch-wielders have leave to
mete out treatment not befitting street dogs---
freedom has no meaning.
Kristallnacht came casting lead ballots, overthrowing Black elected officials and Massacring those that VOTED for them—Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898; Kristallnacht came shooting, looting and burning; Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1921; Rosewood, Florida, 1923; Muslim Mosque # 27, L.A., 1962; came with scorched earth for schoolchildren’s food from the Black Panther Party Free Breakfast Program for Fred Hampton’s home…

Kristallnacht came this time by bus, by train, by plane, by car—storming Capitalist Hill with guns, knives, tasers, mace, bear spray, retractable batons, brass knuckles and Badges. Did it come fighting Slow-pitch-Mitch-Two-buck-Chuck-Chancy-Nancy over mile-long food lines? Over bellies beginning to bloat and sound like zoos? Over tiny voices whining, “Daddy, I’m hungry”? Kristallnacht came a thousand Sheriff Joes, Jim Clarks, Bull Connors—bent badges, macabre tattoos celebrating extrajudicial executions; a thousand ‘roid raging wild Boers snorting thin blue lines of Third Reich ideology; Kristallnacht came disguised as Mr. Magoo mistaking flagpoles and Fire extinguishers for batons; tables for battering rams; Like cell-phones morphing into guns in Black hands—and backs into bullseyes…

Kristallnacht came with confederate battle flags; came greeting Blue uniformed Black capitol cops as ‘Officer Nigger—’ tail-gating Lynch mob, Georgia on its mind—Dead set on disenfranchising Detroit’s 13th New York’s 14th Minneapolis’s 5th Boston’s 7th St. Louis’1st L.A.’s 37th/43rd Oakland’s 13th declaring that Bourgeois democracy is officially over…
Kristallnacht came flying Delta and American Airlines over stagecoach and buckboard—came plotting with congress members by Internet, rather than telegraph; Kristallnacht came vaccinated against the 21st Century—and engaged in hand-to-hand combat with second/minute/hour hands to overthrow motion, change, and development resembling streets of rainbow rebellion ‘cross the country; ‘round the world…

Kristallnacht came—though low Barr left town—and Grecian Formula 9/11 failed in Philly…Kristallnacht came in “Trial by Combat”
Count Ghouliani living on 9/11 blood—
The Count cuts his fangs on drunken NYPD officers rioting and urinating on Dinkins’ leadership. The Count knew reduction in force; horses; cordoned off perimeters; protest pens; L-Rad; kettling…

Kristallnacht came whistling dixie, “Supporting The Troops”
Came questioning “The War On Terror;”
refuting “Defund the police”
For who else can shatter glass, skulls and illusions like that? Who?
there was a time when reading and writing
were forbidden for us
education a luxury
a privilege not afforded to the ink
white paper, for White people
black lettering reminds us we were stains
eventually, wet scribbles begin to run,
but the effects remain
we, staring at notebooks turn to
each other for information and insight,
painting pictures in the shape of freedom
we made use of tablets long before technology
entire tables of content scribed in hieroglyphics
those heroes were never honored
laying down the foundation
for future conversations
these poems are the excavation of our bones
ancestral knowledge stitched within our DNA,
lined with spines sturdy and bendable
like notepads we are the story
muzzled and chained from early ages
these cages were made to be conjugated
broken down from full sentences to
notes on scrap paper left in the trash
my legacy will read more like an anthology
to find the words that define our struggles
to find the words that define our struggles
than a tragedy we scrimmage and scrum
The Vote
Christopha Moreland

1952 an elementary school mock secret vote Presidential election
Me a shy nine year old
only student to vote Progressive Party candidates
Hallinan for President
Bass for first Black and female Vice Presidential candidate in American history.
Eisenhower the landslide winner in the country and my school.
The laughing student body at assembly when school results were announced.
He the clumsy leering student announcer who linked the lone vote to me.
He the Principal who called me to the stage as an example for standing up for one’s beliefs.
They...my beaming parents who took me for malted milk
The Sugar Bowl the favorite Harlem ice cream parlor on 7th Avenue
I still glow at the memory.
Shifting the Blues (2014) 19” x 22”
Acrylic on linen
Matt Turov
1957, Harlem New York
All Girls Junior High School 136
I leave 9th Grade English class when she sends for me

In her office, shared with four others
Stacks of manila envelopes teeter on desk and chair
Nowhere to sit, we stand

Peering down at a file labeled with my name.
This brittle white woman, no taller than me says,
“I have a good vocational high school for you to
apply to in lower Manhattan.
“You can study secretarial skills
Work in many types of offices after graduation”

I stare in disbelief
Outrage sends a red heat
flushing from scalp to stomach

hands clench to squelch the urge to lash out,
my throat tightens as angry statements of
protest careen through my brain

How many female students of my skin color,
had she misdirected
based on negative assumptions

regarding intellect and potential
How many parents,
unskilled in negotiation of the educational system

had she manipulated to accept less
than their children had earned or deserved
How many dreams unrealized

And how had not the papers in
her teetering file informed her
I’d already passed the admissions test to
the Bronx H.S. of Science.
Slow, Smooth, Soft Serene
Sheila Benedis
Journey Through Darkness Into Light
Sheila Benedis
Bebo el sol de un solo trago,
absorbo su fuerza
para que de mi garganta
emerja líquido canto.

La cristalina corriente
se mueve con el paso
del tiempo.

Un instante que se esfuma.

No hay seres marinos
que naden con ésta.

Solo tu tinta revuelta
con la mía como si fuera
un pacto de sangre.

I drink the sun in a single gulp,
I absorb its strength
so liquid song will emerge
from my throat.

The crystalline current
moves with the passing
of time.

An instant that dissipates.

There are no sea creatures
swimming with this current.

Only your ink intermingled
with mine like
a blood pact.
My Mother Named Me Beloved
Kalila Abdur Razzaq
I spin around to make a day into a night
So you can work, play and sleep
I travel long distances to make the seasons
So you can have different and predictable experiences
An envelope surrounds me
Letting in just enough sun to warm you
But not enough to burn you

I have many children of many different kinds
Who all make their way in the world however they can
Most of them take what they need and leave the rest
And once upon a time it all balanced

That is not true anymore
One group has become greedy
Now I think balancing
Is a thing of the past
This group seems to think
That I will nurture them forever
Regardless of what they do
I do not think they realize
That I will go on no matter what
But I may not welcome them anymore
Once I Was a Mother

Anna Limontas-Salisbury

I

Once I was a mother
Guiding a girl to school daily
On the M101 bus
Down Amsterdam Avenue
Reading books
About Black girls named Kenya
Answering questions, about people and places out the window
Answering questions, about dinner possibilities
And being reminded,
Mommy please don’t forget to buy me a new yellow swim cap
I have swim today
Amongst the boom bap of other children
Rapping, clapping and laughing
Day already rushing
Bus and us
Racing with the rising sun over East Harlem
To leave a girl in the arms of
Our Lady Queen of Angels
Once I was a mother
Unwrapping a scarf that held
Box-braided hair
A hurried morning
Of brushing teeth
A washed face
Coated in petroleum jelly
Till she shone like a penny
Add a powder blue peter-pan-collared-shirt
Plaid skirt and navy tie
Till a schoolgirl and her momma
are ready to fly
Down a four-floor-walk-up
Out the door / around the corner
Two blocks to 155th and St. Nicholas
Swipe through the turnstile
Running down the stairs
Where a C train sails to 125th
“Out of darkness into the marvelous light”¹
Where Nigerian and Senegalese drivers wait
In black cars to negotiate

¹ Lyric from
‘He’s Done Great Things’ by Beverly Glenn, musician, composer and singer
I Am You, Acrylic, 2020
Katori Walker
The Return

Katori Walker

As she rose from the muddy dirt
a raging wind blew against her red dress

Her worn dark skin shined like eggplant
a white butterfly gently landed on her shoulder

From her plump swollen lips a sigh more powerful
than thunder
emerged and shook the ground

Her fingers were long like carrot sticks. She ran
them
through her coarse hair and straightened her back.

Her tall 6 foot figure through the mist was a
beautiful black silhouette
she walked toward me  I smiled

She seemed to glide gracefully as she stepped and
splashed through wet puddles

In moments she stood before me
handed me a juicy tomato

A gift she remembered was my favorite.
The sweet juices flowed to the ground.
Once I Was a Mother

Anna Limontas-Salisbury

3
Once I was a mother
Listening to a girl
Make a prayer request
Make my mommy a Virgin Mary
Make me a sibling, a sister
I’ll read her books
I’ll help her bathe
She promised
Assured that
God answers prayers

4
Once I was a mother
A girl made patterns
Around the border of her room
Organizing shoes, bears and dolls
According to color, size, texture
Marveling at what she’d built
Artsy friends brought an easel, brushes and paint
Like mourners bring dishes
To a funeral repass
To celebrate a spiritual rise
Once I was a mother
Of a girl
Who asked to bring home sea-shells
But insisted on collecting horse shoe crabs
Instead
Because bigger is more better

Once I was a mother
Of a girl who declared
I’m a boy-girl, not a girl-girl, but a boy-girl,
do you understand mommy?
As a child
I was shy
not socially adept
A super achieving student
Aspergers made me different
I didn’t understand the world
My mother never knew about Aspergers
Couldn’t appreciate my positive qualities
I was never exposed to art or music
She didn’t understand my gifts
I felt inferior inadequate

Anger overtook my life
With overwhelming sadness
I feel rage now
Pain remains
in my body my soul
I can’t forgive her
the kettle whistles with battery juice filled on a stove logs upturned on a wall my mothers twin born and died in sixty seconds a fingerprint of a fight a soiled carpet chair legs eating the floor like ripley’s alien mother-gorged and web-strung hoping the past will come by stay and fight it is to be expected that your mother after all she is is from where she's from and is here in this where it was thought she would arrive after all that happened she may or may not know you afterwards

she mother knowingly connected to her mother her maids frock lets it all go under the shelves of tinned this and that so we’ll get takeaways instead and call the psych nurse but it goes to another telephone exchange the kettle boils and mother she was once knowingly is hovering inches past the shrink told her it might be like this sometimes so roll with it and she mother accordingly is a seer a quaker speaking in tongues spilling on the carpet the channel switches for real the news hanna barbera where anything happens like walking in space like spinning your head like here in the kitchen where a kettle hums in her rockabye way and the nurse in drag secretive it is to remain secret it is to be expected
Longing
Rosi Hertlein

I
My mother walked me to my violin lessons
Through the park with big old trees
home to many birds

Past the bakery that had my favorite sweet
a cylindrical wafer dipped in dark
bitter chocolate filled with whipped cream

Past the school where I suffered
four years under cruel teachers
Through the little gardens
where we stole flowers through the fences

Past the beer brewery that announced itself
with the intense smell of hops long before
we walked along its’five hundred meters gray stone wall

Past the Protestant Church with the fallen bell tower

Past the Catholic Church,
whose three bells seemed to always ring
when we passed

We crossed the busy street
into the old neighborhood north of the castle

Past the houses built from thick sandstone
Up wooden stairs that creaked

Up to the third floor to my teacher’s home
Through the doors with ornamented glass

I was seven then
Later I took the trip alone
once a week for years
The red brick Catholic Church rang and rang.
I imagined the bells being my height,
wide enough to sit in them
Stretching my neck all the way
I saw them swing back and forth,
fall into the massive clappers,

So loud, it was painful
But it was much more than that:
You could feel the sound push the air

And the vibration reached
Every bone, blood vessel, muscle
Until you became a bell

A ring modulation of every overtone
Simultaneously rushed through
And around your ears

An experience that felt like torture
And yet, it’s intensity fascinated

I once was asked, what I missed most from home
Easy church bells and European blackbirds

He looked at me puzzled, two random things, he said
Not understanding, that both had to do with sound

Not understanding that all of existence is vibration

Sunday mornings, when all churches
rang their bells at the same time
inviting sheep to come to mass
Photo:
Rosi Hertlein
The sparkle in her eye was waning.  
She no longer enjoyed her favorite chocolates.  
Words, of which she had been a master, often failed her now.  
Eventually her body forgot how to walk— 
But she never forgot my name, or how to hug me... 
herself. 

Incredulous now 
the sun rises and courses 
without her wildfire.  
She...seeker of truth, 
right and life's deep wonders.  
She...all warmth and light.  
Sitting in her space, 
half-filled boxes and bare walls 
echo my sadness.  
Would that I could tell her again the depth of my love, 
thank her anew for the Mothering— 
her skills born of intellect, sensitivity, curiosity.  
Images scurry, 
quick flashes of her presence, 
joyful and loving.  
She left much for me, 
heartfelt words, writ and spoken.  
Tears stream, bittersweet.
She gets up every morning despite the amount of rest she got last night
She prepares breakfast in between her children’s classes
She drops off the children according to their schedule
She feeds the baby milk when she cries
She runs back and forth helping her children join their meetings
She cleans the rooms in the short amount of time she has
She cooks lunch for everyone in the house
She sometimes cleans up and sometimes she receives help
She helps her children with their homework
She looks at the time and gets back to work
She’s tired but she doesn’t stop
She picks up the kids, makes dinner
She showers and when night hits she lays down

The day is over but
she knows tomorrow
she’ll do the same
Women are so powerful men could not help but name some of the most powerful things in the world a “she” They name ships, planes, trucks, and other powerful vehicles after us

They stand in our wake
We cannot help but be noticed
Be acknowledged
Be truly seen and heard
In all our righteous and deserved glory

We compare women to black widows and vipers
We have seen nuclear bombs and were drawn to call them “women”
Don’t say it’s not lady-like to take up space
Let’s demand respect- claim our power

We will not be overlooked
We will amplify our voices here and now
We create life and art
We will run faster and throw harder
We will rule countries with peace and...
The Power of She

The power of she is independent

The power of she is strong and lovable

The power of she is brave
doesn't care what others think about her

The power of she is not replaceable
No one can ever be her or take her place.

The power of she is amazing

The power of she is me
And I am confident in myself.
Cooking Pots, Santa Catalina.
Elizabeth Lara
I’m Still Here
Nickoya Winter

My looks are nothing special
My face reveals my age
My body shows some wear and tear
And my energy's not the same

Too often my memory fails me
And I lose things all the time
One minute I know what I plan to do
And the next it may just slip my mind

I try hard to avoid my mirror
There are things I would rather not see
and even those times when I just catch a glimpse
I can no longer recognize me

The things I used to do with ease
can now cause aches and pains
and the quality of the things I do
will never be quite the same

I always compare my older self
to those younger versions of me
and I know I'm wasting too much time
missing who I used to be

The thing that really makes me sad
is despite what people see
underneath my tattered, worn-out shell
I'm still the same old me

My heart can still feel endless love
at times it still can ache
My heart can fill with joy
and then it can suddenly break
My soul can still feel sympathy
and longs for forgiveness and peace
there are times its light shines boldly through
and times when it longs for release

It's true, maybe now that I'm older   Please make
feeling lonely may be status quo
it also has made me more willing
to forgive and let past conflicts go

So maybe to some, I look ugly and old
A person who barely exists
I'm still quite aware of the beauty inside
my value should not be dismissed

Not as strong and no beauty, it's true
I'm still here and want to live
I know that there's no one in this world quite like me
and no one who has more to give.
Upon disinfected tile lays a felled mango, a single drop of gold amongst lifeless architecture sanitized of all personal desire

I gazed upon this tender fruit so far from its roots and I wept

I wept for this fruit in unfamiliar lands, distant from the warmth of its original home

For its tropical dreamscape, like the one I remember from childhood was no longer in its sight

Now it was many thousand miles away from the base of its roots and all the foundation it had lain as part of some grand collective entity

There was sadness in the ease in which life could snatch you away, your circumstances changed upon the breeze of a particularly strong wind, your life changed forever just like this sallow fruit

I looked at the mango and saw upon its yellow mottled flesh the disparities within my own

Dark spots like some gleeful leopard, hyperpigmentation, tender kisses from a sun who could do nothing but love too much

Lasting imprints from a carefree youth in which the sun always shone and my body burned with juvenile mirth

Mementos from when I was too young to perceive my own beauty, so long before I would start collecting creams, serums and solutions in order to fix what I saw as an ultimate beauty flaw

Light spots, faded from the opposite, and the surviving parts from the spots where I bleached my hair too much, my desire for individuality and self expression stronger than my will to conform any longer

For when I had learned who I wanted to be, I, for the first time saw the walls of the glass cage I was trapped within
Expectations like an anchored weight, holding me down to a kind of complacent mediocrity I was happy to reside in until I sought freedom for myself

Until I tasted it upon my tongue like the ripened juice upon a fresh mango

I tasted all I had ever known all at once, the tang of an old world where nostalgia was all that lived there
And then as I swallowed I was left with the emptiness, all the pain that had been burned into me as I met the intersection of my pain and my ancestry

But then I took another bite and was filled then with the sweetness of the present, the ebullient dawn of life, past adversities I thought would drown me in their all-consuming wave

I felt the mango juices meld with my saliva, a union as beautiful as the glance back to who I was by the most current version of myself today

And then I knew, I was here to stay
Ballet Shoes
Christopha Moreland
Dancing child of sunlight,
dangling tendrils bouncing ’round your soft brown
face as
delicate steps of joy abound.
Deep feelings pervade my thoughts,
delight my heart as I remember.
Days upon years now have passed, yet you are
forever dearer to me.
you sang as an owl at one minute old as the clock raced to meet you at your birth
the tube lights above made string bows in your eyes  fluttered at the ceiling fan
blue faces bent down and you sang a rare sight in a mother’s ward an owl caught
in the delivery room  taking it all in you sang well wouldn’t you know it the way
they live here  one caught you and weighed you feathers white  another smiled
in war zone relief a blue bandana wet  they said birth is a car crash in reverse
a coming together in pieces  a righting  a buoy surfacing passed off peacefully
you flew over this rta delivery  to land on the cot mummified  in crochet knots
in white borrowed drapes in silence in a rebuttal of the oxygenated scream  the
song of an owl about to stay and about to leave

note: rta = road traffic accident
My grandmother was born in the early 1900’s
The second child on her parents’ farm in Arkansas

She told me about being a girl
Helping her brother and father
pick cotton, herbs and vegetables.

Pearl’s mother was a cook,
an elder woman full of grace
she nurtured me from an early age

I lost my grandmother
this woman that taught me
how to set a formal dinner table
iron clothes, clean a home

Pearl was a woman of much knowledge
although she could not read
She taught me how to appropriately
treat human beings
pay bills, cook, bake, make chow-chow
quilts and darn socks

I read the Bible to my Grandmother
This woman from humble beginnings
Make your money but save for a rainy day!
A man wants to come home and smell good food
I have survived because she
gave me a lifetime of education and unconditional love
Sharon Dudley

My Grandmother Pearl’s Natural Remedies

1. Earaches:
   A. Salt is a natural cleaner and it draws. Place 2 tablespoons of salt into a small pan of water. Heat for 5 minutes, then place inside aluminum foil which will maintain the salt’s heat. Next, wrap in a washcloth or a cloth bag and secure to prevent scalding. Finally, place the warm salt pack on affected ear for about 10 minutes.
   B. Oil of Cloves kills bacteria. Warm 2 tablespoons of Oil of Cloves in a double boiler for about 2 minutes. Let it cool; place about 2 drops of warm Oil of Cloves into affected ear. Sit still for at least 10 minutes.
   C. Warm 2 chopped Garlic Cloves in 2 tablespoons of Sesame Oil for about 3 minutes strain. Let it cool for about 2 minutes. Next, place 3 drops in the affected ear.

2. Sore Muscles:
   Place ½ cup of Epsom Salt in your bath water as warm as you can bare it. Soak for 20 to 25 minutes. Dry off, then put on socks and a pair of warm pajamas. Take a nap or go to sleep for the night.

3. Arthritic Pain:
   A. Warm 1 cup of White Vinegar in a nice pot. While vinegar is warming, cut a brown shopping bag into 4 pieces. Then place those 4 pieces into the pot for 3 to 4 minutes. Let White Vinegar and brown paper cool so not to burn skin. Next, place a towel under the affected area (i.e. knee) and wrap knee with brown bag tightly and cover with towel for 15 minutes.
   B. Eucalyptus Oil is an Essential Oil. Place a capful of Eucalyptus Oil in warm bath water as tolerated. This can produce your own sauna, soak in tub for 10 to 15 minutes. Dry off well. Put on a pair of socks and a pair of warm pajamas, take a nap or go to sleep for the night.
4. Cuts and Scratches:
Always wash the area with mild soap; pat dry with sterile gauze. If cut is not deep, pour Hydrogen Peroxide (3%) over affected area. Allow to remain in the affected area for 2 minutes. Pat dry with sterile gauze. Spread thin coat of triple antibiotic ointment, or Vaseline. If the area is real deep and won’t stop bleeding, proceed to clinic or hospital.

5. Mosquito and Spider Bites
This will be a topical application. Make a paste with 2 tablespoons of baking soda, 1 tablespoon of cold cream. Place this paste directly on the bite. The area should be less painful and the swelling will go down.
Lemongrass Tea
Sharon Dudley

The fever made me lazy
dormant

Somehow with this fever
I made it to the yard by myself
asked the leaves to give themselves to me

I nicknamed you fever grass
Lemongrass is your known name
Cymbopogon to the Greeks and those dudes in white coats
But I learned from tongues of dead grandmothers
that you were the key to break my fever

Lemongrass tea
too lazy to go to the pharmacy
My first experiment was done that day

On me with tea! Lemongrass tea!
“Faith: either you have it or you don’t” my mother said. Baptized to remove Original Sin. Knelt and said bedside prayers to save my soul Religion was an obligation

Got dressed up for Church Went through the motions Masses in Latin before I turned 10 Incomprehensible, mystical drone in a fog of incense All crucifixes and iconic images, priestly vestments in violet veils

Starting on Passion Sunday Gave up candy for the 40 days of Lent Reward was a diabetic coma inducing cornucopia of sweets at Easter The altar adorned with the heady scent of white lilies Vestments of white for the pageantry of the procession of Page boys with white plumed berets, altar boys, priests

Midnight mass at Christmas, con-celebrated with three priests The choir sang sacred music, accompanied by pipe organ The altar draped in greenery, red and white poinsettias Rituals repeated while I remained under my parents’ roof

Fifth grade in Catholic school We wore scapulas Prayers said for Indulgences – time off Purgatory In readiness for Confirmation to become Soldiers for Christ Willing martyrs The drip began...

So much celestial record keeping! Sins washed away in Confessional booths, you got a clean slate for saying Penance: a designated number of Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Be,

Quantity varied depending on the priest who heard the sin recital All the while knowing the same recitation would likely take place next week Before partaking in Communion, purified Already feeling like a liar, when promising to sin no more
Drip, drip…
A vengeful God
Testing Abraham to slay his beloved son
Jesus himself, Son of God
Sent to earth for sacrifice
to take away our sins

Adam and Eve
Banished from Paradise
their thirst for knowledge forbidden

Obey or be damned!
Floodgates opened in high school religion class
When a classmate was banned for questioning:
Where was God when all the horrors of wars, slavery, the Holocaust occurred?

The Holy Wars
The murder of heretics
Elimination of dissent
The Holy Inquisition
The triumph of True Faith
Tidal wave of confusion in college.

So many faiths!
How can they all be valid?
Fear of the Infidel label
Burning of witches
Religion by the sword
Rivers of blood shed in Religion’s name
Faith was doused in a deluge of doubt.

What makes sense? What rings true?
Simplify
trust in yourself
to follow The Golden Rule:
Do onto others
as you would have them do onto you.
Imagine that Golden world.
Once I Was a Mother
Anna Limontas-Salisbury

7
Once I was a mother
Of a girl who declared
I am Catholic not Baptist okay Mommy?
I believe in Mother Mary
I’m a Catholic. Is that okay Mommy?

8
Once I was a mother
Of a girl
who after the death of a kitten
Spent the day at a desk beside me
Creating “I love you kitten” tribute books
Passing them out like programs at a funeral parlor
Eulogizing the dead until
Sent with her yellow swim cap to the pool

9
Once I was a mother
Of a girl
Begging to ride the bus
116st Street and Amsterdam alone
Me, a mother sleep-walking
In jeans with holes
Where the thighs meet
A scarf covering locks
No lipstick
At the corner of 153rd and Broadway
With Dominican grandmothers
Still escorting their preteens to school
Waving to the girl on the bus
Leaving me to wonder about my mothering
Once I was a mother
Of a girl
Spotted acting fresh and cussing on
The corner of 118th
Hanging with that girl
Sister Mary said was no good

Once I was a mother
Of a girl
In friendship with the no good girl
experimenting with Wiccan rituals

Once I was a mother
Of a girl who cried
Of a broken heart
Who became a girl
Broken over unmothered girls

Once I was a mother
Of girl on a road trip
Unable to stop thinking of Black girls
On road trips
Gone Black girls
And the mothers and others who said their names

Once I was a mother
Of a girl who came back waving hello
Who came back waving hello
Waving hello
Waving hello
Comingling Polarities
(2008) 50” x 150”
Acrylic on linen
Matthew Turov
KIDS ROAR RAW
She asked for a strong BOY to help her carry the chairs. But even then I kept my hand up, I was determined.
You see I was the strongest, the 4th fastest in the class, I even did taekwondo, won a gym mvp and did ballet and tap which was not made for delicate toes might I add. But I was a girl. In that third-grade classroom I knew that I would always vouch for girls. And although I did not know that term yet, I would become a feminist. But that's not my first time experiencing sexism at a young age. I experienced many times like the one I faced in 3rd grade. My 8-year-old self even thought that I wanted to be a boy because I enjoyed playing in dirt and playing basketball much rather than doing my friends nails.
But I was simply just a girl who broke gender norms. But the kids around me bullied me for it. And the boys did not let me play with them because I was not as good as sports because I was a girl. But adults did not understand because “boys will be boys” and “they must like you”. Boys are not entitled to girls. But it seemed that I often had to remind my friends and me that as I got older. If I had a dollar for every time I heard the line “I’ll kill myself if you do not go out with me,” I’d be as rich as Kim K.
again Years passed and I am now at my current age. The age where I am constantly being told I can’t wear certain things because I will distract boys or because they cannot control their urges. The age where society feels my body is a taboo subject,

So I watch girl talk videos to gather my information. I wonder why girls are considered hoes and treeshes for having a high body count or even losing their v-card. But boys are praised. If I told you about a teen boy who lost his v-card or watches sexual entertainment it would almost seem expected. But when it comes to a girl people would ask “why didn’t they wait for marriage”. You see I am just a teenager. But gender related I have nothing to look forward to. What? Am I supposed to look forward to my boyfriend asking my father to date or marry me...like I am a possession. Or when I finally turn 21, oh but wait I’ll have to
memorize all of the signs to tell the bartender a strange man is following me. I'll even have to find a trusting lady to hold my drink at parties while I use the bathroom so I don't get taken advantage of.

Lets not forget about how I have to ignore the pay gap between me and my male colleagues so I do not get fired. I’ll also have to remember to hope for a baby boy so I don’t have to face the pink-tax. Oh and I can't forget that I can’t breastfeed my baby in public because people hate babies that eat in public.

And lastly I’ll have to remember to always dress modest… that includes not wearing a sports bra on runs, because we all know the famous claim “she was asking for it”. At Least if I do get taken advantage of they can't use the claim about my clothes. Even Though clothes have nothing to do with it. I hope those phrases make you uncomfortable. These are the realities of being a girl. It goes from worrying about your shirt getting you dress-coded to your shirt getting you assaulted. STOP making excuses for sexism and male privilege and start doing something about it. Because as time progresses it will only get more normalized.
Sketch of Golda Teaching Online
Paislyn Santiago
Collage
Paislyn Santiago
My BFF Michelle
Michele Ginzburg
I Dream of Paris

Jiana Lofay
adORATIONS AND MISlikes
After 92/250 Richard Merkins *Amores*
Collage
Golda Solomon
We were kids. Our mother’s drank Maxwell coffee and complained. Mom and I were visiting on the “rich” side of the Building. The front entrance into 185 Erasmus St. where white painted flower boxes with greenery and lattice work adorned a red brick façade. 185 an upwardly mobile, spanking new, middle class apartment house.

Our apartment B12 looking out at Nostrand Ave. The screech of the subway sound traveled up to our second floor apartment. I still love that sound. Shops on Nostrand included the comings and goings of Frank the Barber; you knew he was open when the red and white striped barber pole was lit. People in and out of the IRT Church Avenue Station. The trolleys electric sparks, then later, new busses.

Our easiest entrance, through the basement past the storage room. The storage room, unlocked was full of old carriages awaiting new babies, cribs, tricycles and two wheelers, beach chairs. Anything that wasn’t used in your apartment found its way there- a hodgepodge.

Only when we retrieved our mail from Charlie-his long chain with important keys and his grey/blue hat on and spiffy uniform at the silver polished mailboxes-did we see the front of the building. The years there were good for some-families moved on to Long Island and beyond and not so good for other tenants- death and divorce altered their movements and they stayed. We and the Merkins were two of those families.

Holidays the lobby Christmas tree was real and a Chanukah menorah flashed lights. Gifts and wrapped packages were real, decorated for Charlie the mailman and for the super of the building and his family. Furniture didn’t have to be chained down then. The only “negro” face was Hilda, Dr. Kuritsky’s live-in maid. There was a separate street entrance for his patients. I grew up weary of the tune ‘ Why can’t you be more like Sandra Kuritsky”- she was unimaginative,
coddled, and Hilda met her every day after school with a banana and a jar of milk and walked her home. We lived a few walkable blocks from PS 246. We were independent and safe as long as it didn’t snow. Then snowballs with ice in them were thrown at us from the boys at Holy Cross—“Get the kikes.” they’d scream in glee. “Get the Jews”. We didn’t stop to say we weren’t all Jews.” We ran for our lives.

My mother’s idea or Mrs. Merkin’s - throw some Tide in the tub, fill it up and there was a bubble bath, fit for a young prince and princess. They talked, we splashed. The water got cold and we didn’t care. We were playing. Richie would grow up to be Richard Merkin, painter, professor, the only extra in the Great Gatsby film who did not need to be costumed. His persona was dressing in that period. We grew and moved happily away from there. Through the years we saw each other -mutual friends lived in the same Brooklyn Heights apartment.

A chance meeting on the upper west side meant coffee and catch-up at a Chock Full of Nuts counter. What were we doing now, No glances back at our Brooklyn growing up years. They were behind us and we moved on. One of my young mentees studied with him at RISD, Charlsie, then Chuck then Charles Grossman our other neighbor studied with him at RISD. When Richard Merkin died, the college had a grand goodbye to their esteemed faculty member.

Many years went by since his passing and in an upscale Tarrytown shop we were reunited with his art. The owner and he had been friends and she was selling a Merkin that had hung on her walls. It’s now on a prominent wall in my living room. I own Amores #72/250.

A friend recently said,” Isn’t that you in it?” “No, I think it’s his sister Carol.” She the first death of a young person from an overdose whom I knew.
In Amores, a dapper man donning a yellow hat tilted forward, brown jacket, blue shirt, boutonniere, strums a guitar in a rowboat. Is that you Ritchie?

Wherever you look, your gaze is taken to another section, where I look at a spinning Toulouse like character figure- Popeye lives on this work also. Faded images are organized and burst beyond the borders. Although they look haphazardly placed, they are carefully thought out by this great artist. Each time I look I see something new and stand back and look and look.

I create collages now at a glass topped African table with an authentic historic game and figures etched into the hardwood. Regal figures live in the table. My good friend Imani brought it back after a teaching assignment. I cover the glass surface with newspaper sheets, roll my blue supply filled cart next to the table and play in my sandbox, cut and paste away. Richie’s work prompts me to whimsy, expand, explore on a 16x20 stretched canvas. The Hudson oversees my artistic creation and I happily collage away. My river is an estuary and I suppress an urge to buy some Tide, take it down to the promenade and fling capfuls of soap powder and watch the water churn bubbles as this mighty water flows south towards New York City and Brooklyn. One day I will run a bubble bath for the ducks.
92/250 Amores
Richard Merkin
Compulsion to Create Art
Sheila Benedis
As a Child
Sheila Benedis

I thought that fast was better
I could accomplish more
Do more in life

Then I started Tai Chi
Slow smooth soft serene
Completely foreign to me

Slowness became perfection
Calmed me, gave me patience
Something never felt before

Now I know why
I love doing art
Creating slows down my life
If the universe gave wishes
I would remove
the dark spots from my face

I would regard
these moles as cosmic content
stars and constellations
my face a galaxy

Chemists have designed creams
to remove fine lines and wrinkles
Truth be told
I have lived each wrinkle
And earned every line

If the universe granted wishes
I would remove this suffering
heavy as chains
weighing down my breath
erasing my smile.
Pascualina (she, her, hers)
Ysabella Hincapie-Gara
Multimedia Installation with found objects
2020
My drawers are organized
My closets are organized
They always were

My atelier
Is another story

In the name of ART
I have become a hoarder
Some people call it “Stuff”

At odds with myself
At odds with ART

Some days life bears heavy on me
Not for any particular reason

There are people who
Look at the face death
Every single day

And yet I worry about
My messy stuff

I wonder if minimalism
Is a peaceful way of living
With nothings to fill the mind

Some days I feel like a caterpillar
Who morphed into a cocoon
The imprint of the butterfly on its wall

How is that related
To my organized drawers
The atelier full of stuff

Thoughts
Consciousness

What is really important
Butterflies or death
Finally death came
Howard lived death
for many years.
His situation
Nursing home
No stimulation
Confined to a wheelchair
He never complained
He was alone
No activity
Slept all day
Stopped talking
Gave up on life
I watched the man I loved deteriorate
not really living any more.
All I could do was
Pay attention
Pay the bills
I felt helpless.
Howard grew up during the depression
Recovered from a serious childhood illness
Became an engineer
Loved skiing, sailing
Going to the library
Involved in investments
Howard was serious,
so generous with
His time, his money, his ideas
He quietly supported
our son
me as an artist
Introduced us to hiking
Led an active life
Until dementia slowly took over
the night you came here all the tv detectives lined up on wall posters sheer stockings tunes of birds and sea shores like the time we threw stones at cars lit a fire and smoke filled your room a ball with no air or curtains I lie still clocks tick then we run break windows the thing to do like sing or break your foot or scoop from wrappers last nights potatoes

kojak, columbo horatio caine all the presenters of sesame street big bird and his depression his bulimia his yellow alopecia don’t look back run more eat more sugar and crumbs and dead ends then we stop in silence stand

sing ad jingles around and around and this time in a dark morning in a closed room breathing for another time is the story of incanting your arrival from dead to ghost from ghost to mist
I met you first as fire, musk and flesh
of a boy just out of reach

wild shoots pushing up through
April snows.

Long before I knew your name
your face shifted.

I could not tell what you wanted
of me. No doors or walls

could hold you – you gave my body
to the air, to the shove

the toss, the swarm of sweat. Everything I met
I tasted. Blood on my tongue.

You were a wick planted in oil –
I burned it over and over.

Oh, but you are fickle. You left me only
the dried-up stalks, Bird of Paradise
When I say your eye sees scabbard,  
and mine the dagger, I mean this:

the bird-of-paradise planted  
in our garden. Under our breath

shift the cliffs of the Rift,  
its steep sides a quiver of blades

sharp as our ancestors’ teeth.  
We walk the ridge, wedged

between sky and rock, peaks  
alight, the god-fires of night

behind us. Come morning,  
a strange bird rises in flight

yellow dagger slicing  
through the early slanted light.
Praise to the fingers I am able to feel things with. As I shop, feeling the texture of all the clothes. Praise to my fingers that run through the sand on a hot summer day. The same fingers that scoop up seaweed and peg it at my family members. Praise to my fingers that are able to feel love, as I held hands with my family members when I was little. As my hands grew, the love from interlocked fingers spread to more people: my friends and other relationships. Praise to my fingers that can wear rings. The beauty and meaning the rings hold and some day, these fingers will wear an engagement ring and wedding band. Praise to these fingers that feel love through other people and myself. Here’s to, my tiny fingers.
Praise to the Chocolate Chip Cookie

Emily Gianni

Praise to my chocolate chip cookie. Praise to the cookies I used to bake with my cousin Fatima. She always used to tap my hand when I ate the cookie dough. Although my hands hurt from getting hit, it was worth the pain. The cookie dough was so good. Praise to the chocolate chip cookie. When I went to my best friend Katie’s house, we tried to bake cookies. All the cookies moved to the middle of the pan, and we laughed hysterically. The cookies were awful, and my stomach hurt from laughing. Praise to the chocolate chip cookie. When I went into the city with the boy across the hall, Michale, we bought Insomnia cookies. On the train ride back, we ate the warm cookie. The warmth of the melted chocolate, and on the way down to my belly, felt like heaven. How nice it felt after a long day of walking, especially with my ankle in pain from being sprained. Praise for the love of my chocolate chip cookie, that was with me throughout my life.
It seems as though
you are a part of the family five days a week, some
time on Sunday, as if your comfort was easy, when you are mush or stable, able to fill
the plate, a decorated veteran the war in the kitchen, many days, momma did not feel like
a breakfast, so she ran to the cabinet, whether bran or oats we consumed all of you
before school or church
a way to explode like popcorn the flakes made us full
grits, I see your silver hair in Harlem like grandma
like aunt Jemina, someone
repurposed you, someone unearth you making you gourmet making you “chey” while adorning
with almond or raisin, brazen to see you modern, a stick of celery or sherry, goat cheese
please grits, the diner places shrimp or sausage
maybe they thought you need
more power, with all that
delicious grease or butter
not my mother, she loved you
plain, and your name
grits, not farina or oatmeal
or mush, we did not fuss just ate the way you gravitate the plate.
Hated it with a passion.  
As if it poisoned me in a past life,  
With its fried noodles  
Green and red peppers oh and onions too!  

Bora…. Chinese long beans,  
Oh it fascinates me  
How your ingredients go by many names  
For some… to difficult to pronounce  
So many variations of this dish that I used to hate  

Now sitting in my lap  
Enjoying the taste  
Of Guyanese Chow Mein  
That younger me had a distaste for  
Wow this pandemic was truly pushing for a change.

*Guyanese pronunciation of the word Chow Mein.*
In never years,  
on never date of never time  
You will get there.  
In never trying,  
And forever fearing  
You will get there  
In never feeling pain  
And in never remembering  
To learn from your failures  
You will get there  
Never feeling, never failing, never trying  
You WILL NOT GET THERE!
Far Rockaway
Nora Freeman

Far Rockaway, my little “home town”
In the great big NYC
Long ago, a resort for the rich
But they left their big houses
And beach bungalows
For greener pastures
Making room for more humble folks
Like my more middle-class family

We rode our bikes
from one end of the boardwalk
To the other end,
Discovering micro-neighborhoods
5 miles away
Rode them
Passing skeeball games and hot dog stands
Splashing in the cold salt water
our tiny corner of the Atlantic Ocean
#2
We learned an Israeli game called machanayim
A combination of catch and dodgeball
It was so much fun we wanted to play it all the time
But we needed 4 people to play
And usually it was just my sister and me
So we taught the game to everyone we could
And played it all day every day that summer
Had Chinese food upstairs at the Far Rockaway Palace
And felt so glamorous
I was happy at home
With my family and friends on the block
But school was a different matter
Just could not fit in there
I thought a commuter high school
would be a new start
It didn’t really work out
Wherever you go, there you are

Took a long time to learn that lesson
Let me tell you how I feel about people who park their cars not in but next to empty spaces

Let me tell you how I feel about the driver in front of me texting

Let me tell you what I think of bureaucrats who measure their importance in wait time

Let me tell you what I think of the officer who hangs up on you when you call in a high-speed tailgater

Let me tell you how I feel about burgers on public conveyances the smell of raw onions gummed and bashed about

Let me tell you what I think about chicken so hormonal it climaxes on your plate

I don’t have to tell you about Verizon

But I really ought to tell you that when I visit I will straighten every crooked picture on your walls
Sweeping through the sky in waves
in tight, fluid formation
the starlings undulate as one, in hundreds or millions.
Swirling sky dervishes
dance in a dot matrix,
swarming in ever-changing patterns
on the sky canvas.
Morphing from schools of fish
to swirling tornado
to giant sphere
in harmonious perfection.

Feather Murmurations
Debbi Dolan
Butterfly to Boomerang
42” x 28”
Acrylic on linen
Matthew Turov
2017
Thoughts
  Will this year bring contentment
  Will it be better than the last
  Will it be a good year
  Will the future be rosy
  Will the atmosphere improve
know
my flame’s crowded memory:

many lives compressed / reliving snatched moments

eggs frying in skillets
  scrambled over easy
sticky messy messes
  play dough
  bread dough
pound cake half eaten on a cake plate
  neatly placed on a counter
  a pot full of Sunday dinner for family friends
a knock on the door
Friday movie nights
  microwave popcorn burnt
aroma clings to walls
  circling
bicycle wheels
bell ringing
  ringing silence
tap shoes tap… tap… tapping
a horn blowing
  mute

a joke falling from a bell tower
  a sermon
  a prayer
pearls in jewelry boxes
designer progressive lenses
  shading over in shade
communion dress hanging lost
  in a closet
doors slamming open shut open shut
from the wind
messages overtaking voicemail
  children search for Santa Claus in Easter
resurrection
dairy cows full of milk
dark chocolate
  butter cream
rancid
target practice
soccer practice
little league practice
coach position vacant
dust building up
turn on a vacuum
a fly buzzing in an ear
  emptiness howling
wedding daze cancelled
  autumn drives on winding roads
  breezy Harley rides
Disney
Universal Studio
ballerina’s twirl on lonely stages
child  mother  father  sister
  brother
  grandmother
  grandfather
  aunt
  uncle
  cousin
friend
watch the news
a thousand connections
broken traditions
routines
adventures
crowded together
wandering
in my flame
  flickering
wailing unheard
wailing unheard
the screams
to hang on
after the body stopped dreaming
Sunflower Pandemic

Robert Gibbons

no one, but the sunflower wilts like grease and there is no peace until the sun says so, until the
muses stay until the ancestors grants me permission, until my mission

walks, until the shock of yesterday, and last year, not March or May, nor July, but August, the fog
or smoke of heat reeks me like an oven, for this has nothing to do with hope

nothing to do with job or unemployment, nothing with a mob of anger, but my body belongs to
Earth, belong to the sunrise, to the sunflower that only increases with energy

yet, the little light fights to control, but souls are looking for a miracle, in this blizzard of
summer, is not over yet do not find me, because I receive signs from the rainbow

from the undertow of hurricane, and the name is sunshine like the sunflower and its mine to own and
create, in time will hide and wait, do not find me, but hide before another storm

before we join the sunflower in this dowry of happiness call her blessed before death, because
death is only glamorous when you die to selfishness, then rise, walk

sing, then create, make beauty out of the mess, no one but the sunflower will find me, find
myself, stiled, leaned
a mutiny in twenty-twenty

Robert Gibbons

“I want to do more than teach art, I want to bring art to the community as a whole.” (Hale Aspacio Woodruff)

Hale, tell us about post impressionisms
a reject with limitations, your use of vivid color
paint as thick as the rhetoric, and if this is
not real then what is, more of an incline too
emphasize geometric form, as the father sits
in front of the casket with his mouth wide open
the mouth used as voice box to speak like an antebellum
preacher, speak across the fine print, across the broke
down system, the plunder of generations, scream
guilty, murder, or insurrection,

Hale, triage in this hospital ward, the psychological
damage for young men that follow art, how
do we combine draftsman, and printmaker, muralist
and shaman into trilogy, but to capitalize on murder
in block print, like the study of Cinque’s head for philology
in this mutiny of the Amistad, interpretive treatment
of art, the hats become our focal point, we are fascinated
that the hats spew the floor of the court house like bullets,
the hats become our modern baseball caps, but he an
archetype is at the center of our attention in this drama
in his muscular blue, and the old gold wraps his thighs
acquittal is the curvilinear rhythm as impressive as his oil in
dialogue with Purvis and Diego, the peon in homage

Hale, acquittal in curvilinear rhythms, should we say hallelujah
now that his body has been laid to rest, now that this ranks him in
martyrdom, we know about the mutiny, now

we should focus on the trial, the living art being played out before
our eyes, the deception of the paintbrush the rush to keep us
silent, but the brothers make background noise, whisper in the
underground folktales apparent are the lessons, know the
difference between uprisings and rising up.
First Language Loss
Nora Freeman

My father's father fled Poland
A land of fear and misery for Jews
He came to America
Where the streets were “paved with gold”
Wanted that American magic
As fast as he could get it
No Yiddish was spoken in his home!

My mother's parents spoke Yiddish in their home
She and her sister were fluent in it
She and my father met after his return from the war
And soon married
When my mother and aunt
Didn't want anyone to know what they were up to
They spoke Yiddish

Before my mother died
She declared
"Once I'm gone you will never hear
Another Yiddish word"
Not quite true
Many Yiddish words
have been adopted into English
I'm far from fluent
Schools, businesses closed.  
Vaccines developed, distributed, administered.

No quarantines  
No pandemic deaths

Businesses open  
Schools open

Families get together  
Gather again

Happy faces appear  
Peace in the air

More socializing  
Less zooming

What kind of atmosphere  
Will exist next year

Remain careful  
Attentive, watchful
Airborne Pandemic
Marcia Klein

Unseen by human eyes
You fly through the air
Like Robins

Nesting in trees
Outside my window
Robins are beautiful

I watch them fly
Gracefully
In the sky

I can’t see you
I know you’re there
Flying unseen

You make people ill
Destroy them
Take their breath away

I wish I could see you
Make you harmless
Take away your poison

Let you just fly
Through the sky
Harmless like a robin
Sunlight
alarm clock
starlings pecking pecking at my window ledge
radio weather 19 degrees windy
maybe they’re trying to let heat out
even if just a little hole of it.

A diminutive mouse
out from the cold
is hungry
in my apartment
in my head
I want to leave out food

(hunger is everywhere)
but it will breed
so I try to trap it.

They say mice spread disease.

I wonder where I can get a vaccine.
Through my frosted window
February blue sky seems endless
It’s illusion
our sun the only visible star
at night we behold
cosmos full of stars.

Human eyes can’t see the galaxy
and earth at the same time
not unless we rocket to outer-space.

Sometimes to witness truth
requires difficult things.

When they told me COVID took her
breathing machine didn’t work
I didn’t want to believe it
a bit of prose
Three Short Stories

Barbara Glasser

I.
On Xmas morning, sweet, vivacious, brilliant writer of extraordinary (unpublished) epistolary novel, LETTERS TO/FROM URUGUAY, Rosalie, from the Will Library Writers’ Group, told me about her 86-year-old friend, Elsa, who had had a horrible marriage. After Elsa’s husband died, she was determined to have love in her life. Once Covid struck, Elsa stopped going to bars to meet people and started going to, of all places: the cemetery. Rosalie was delighted to report that Elsa met a man at the cemetery and is very happy with her new friend.

II.
On Xmas day, my next door neighbor, Kim, invited me for brunch with her large, and loving family. I sat down beside Alinda, Kim’s elegant mother at the head of the table. Unable to contain myself, I told Alinda with the story of Rosalie’s friend who found love at 86 in the local cemetery, which inspired Agatha to tell me a story of her own. Alinda’s friend’s husband died, and she didn’t want to be alone. Let’s call her friend Portia, because I never did learn her friend’s name, and Portia is as good a name as any. Portia started volunteering at the local Soup Kitchen. After meeting quite a few men, she met one she liked the looks of told him that he was coming home with her. She cleaned him up, had his hair cut and bought him new clothes. When she took him to church, all of her friends wanted to know where she met such a lovely good-looking gentleman. Portia told them: “At the Soup Kitchen.”

III. MOVE OVER
Which reminded me of a story I heard years ago from my old friend Leonard, who owns many parking garages. One of his employees told him that he had just gotten married. Leonard was amazed that this unprepossessing fellow found a woman willing to marry him and asked him where he met his wife. “Outside the homeless shelter,” was the gentleman’s reply.
Sherian Huggins. Joanna Diaz Sanchez. Reshma Kanchan. Tenile Cupid. Johandrys Espinoza. These were five of forty-eight women murdered in Trinidad and Tobago in 2020. The brutality of their domestic violence-related deaths, occurring weeks apart in September and October, do not define them; they were more than statistics collected by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Ranging in ages from 23 to 33 years old, they came from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and languages. Johandrys Espinoza was three months pregnant. Sherian Huggins lived in Morvant with her four children; her son tried to defend her from her attacker. Reshma Kanchan wrote about her struggles on her Facebook page before her death. Joanna Diaz Sanchez came to Trinidad from Venezuela, searching for a better life for her family. Tenile Cupid was the youngest beauty at 23. They were human beings in the prime of their lives, taken from their family, friends, and children who loved them, now shattered.

When I read the women's stories in the Trinidad and Tobago newspapers, I remembered that violence was not a stranger. I'd grown up thinking that what happened to me was not violence but something else. However, violence is violence, even when couched in words like "licks, discipline or man-woman business."

At five years old, when I went to "spend time" with my grandparents at their home in Belmont, my grandmother rarely smiled; her lips looked like a perpetual line. She found little joy in seeing me, running down the lane on our way to church, extending my arms wide, stretching to touch the walls on either side of the road. "Yuh not in a carnival band." She slapped me into walking like a proper child. When I wasn't attending kindergarten school, my grandmother had me close to her elbow, teaching me how to cook, tuck the sheets tightly around the corners of the bed, and pray at the home-altar with the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus looming down on me. At dusk, I cherished the quiet moments with my grandfather. I sat in his room, picking
through the Chinese sweets he brought for my siblings and me from Charlotte Street shops. I prattled on about my day, my lips covered with the almond cookies' sweet fine powder. My grandfather, calm like a Buddha, listened.

While I revered my grandfather, I often felt inclined to rebel against my grandmother. Despite her determination to teach me how to become a perfect homemaker, I would escape, dancing with my broomstick underneath the tall trees in the back yard. First, I noticed light sparkling off the water in the glass bottles on top of the shelves in the dining room near the windows. Then I found other capped bottles with long necks filled with water tucked under the steps leading down to the kitchen and chubby ones around the kitchen's inner perimeter. Wrapping my tiny hands around their smooth surfaces, I removed the bottles, one by one, placing them in the sun on the bench in the backyard. I danced with my broomstick around the bottles, tossing my head back to see my reflection in the glass. Swirling, kicking my legs high, I hit the bench with the stick, smashing two bottles on the cement ground. Hearing my grandmother's voice calling my name, I picked up one of the bottles to return it inside the house and saw her on the steps with a belt in her hand. I dropped the bottle and ran. She caught me between the mango tree and the back fence, whipping me with the strap on my arms, legs, and back. "Ah go tell meh grandpa yuh beat meh," I cried as she dragged me inside the house.

I never forgave my grandmother. Years later, in New York, my mother revealed that at the age of six, she had witnessed my grandfather hitting my grandmother in their shop in Brasso Village in Central Trinidad. My mother cried out for help. My grandmother's sister rallied around her, filling glass bottles with water and placing them strategically around the inside of the shop and house. The camouflaged weapons infused with my grandmother's rage empowered her, keeping my grandfather at a distance until he left their home.

The news rattled me. I remembered my grandfather's
kindness and never saw him speak harshly to my grandmother. I was too young and unaware that she didn't feel safe in her own home unless she had armed herself as if she were at war.

Before my grandmother died in 1985, I asked her what made her happy. We spoke of faith and inner joy. She had found solace in her spiritual life. But violence and intimidation had ended the love between my grandparents, and although heartbreaking, I knew that such circumstances are not uncommon. Intimate partner violence is an endemic problem globally.

Much like my grandfather, the partners of the five women chose to communicate with their fists, not their hearts. Sadly, inflicting pain is learned behavior. Bridget Brereton's article "The Historical Background to the Culture of Violence in Trinidad and Tobago" examines how our legacies of violence, the atrocities perpetrated on the indigenous people, the brutality of slavery, and the mistreatment of the indentured laborers, have influenced Trinidad and Tobago's present crisis in crime and violence. Brereton notes that in those systems, "violence against women, especially murderous attacks and marital abuse ("wife-beating") by men, was a pervasive feature of the society" (Brereton 2010, 13-14).

In 2020, the horrific assaults on women's bodies continued. Forty-eight women were deprived of their human right to life, some thrown on the roadsides' like worthless objects. There is sad normalcy to these killings. As I reflect on the women's stories and my family's experience, I have to wonder when will women's lives be valued? Can we heal our legacies of violence and speak again from love and not fear? Until then, I remember those who have been lost.

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https://tinyurl.com/y57jvd3z
I know what you’re thinking at this point. “Hey! Enough with all this talk about what we are doing wrong and what we need to be thinking about! How about giving us some tips about things that will help us communicate?”
Let me just say to you:
“Whatdyathink I was going to leave you hanging?”
Here is one very important thing that will help. Find your version of a Queens’ front stoop. (Front stoops are used for gathering places, where people sit, chat, and people watch. Oh, if you happen to walk by people sitting on their stoop, you better believe those people are going to look you over and talk about you.)
Go get the person you want to speak to and bring them to your front stoop. Sit next to them, look up at them, and listen!
“What did that Queens Girl just tell me to do? Go find a stoop? What the heck is she talking about?”
Well, you’re not the first person to say that to me; so we’re cool. When I was first writing the speech that prompted this book, I practiced my presentation in front of some very patient friends. (There is a special place in heaven waiting for anyone who has ever had to sit through one of my practice sessions.)
When I got to this part, my friend Martha interrupted me and asked, “Jules, are you sure that people are going to know what a ‘stoop’ is?”
57 JULIENNE B. RYAN LEARNED-IT-IN-QUEENS 58
To which I very patiently replied, “Whatayatalkabouthat? What’s so hard to understand? I am presenting to a smart group of people with big titles, and I am showing them a picture of people sitting on steps in front of their house. How hard is it going to be for them to understand that ‘stoop’ is a word for steps?”
To which Martha replied, “Just tell them!”
Ok, so here’s a brief lesson about why Queens people (and other New Yorkers) call their front steps “stoops.”
First, the Native Americans lived in the borough we now call Queens. Then the Dutch showed up and they had a habit of building very high steps in front of their homes just in case their neighborhood flooded. The Dutch word for those steps was “stoop.” Then the British showed up and stayed for a good bit. Finally, the Brits left, and we became America, and then Queensites. Now fast forward to today! Although our city is known for its fast pace and constant change, the one
thing we managed to keep for a few hundred years is the word “stoop.” So now you know. Today’s history lesson is done!
At the beginning of this playbook I had engaged in some old-fashioned Queensite name-calling and labeled us a “heads-down people and a living-in-a-bubble species.”
I complained about this mutated trait of how we were not looking up anymore, or even engaging in conversations. I pointed out that we were over-reacting when we sent and received each other’s messages.
So here’s my pearl of wisdom. Of course, it starts with a question or two:
Do you have contact with humans every day, perhaps coworkers or other staff? Do you want to build productive relationships? Maybe you even want to spend less time with lawyers?
Find a stoop. Go live. Go human. Find your and their version of a front stoop. Find the places that you can go to sit side by side when you have a conversation. Then listen and have an in-your-space conversation, not an in-your-face interaction.
Practice full-on focus. Actively listen to the person next to you!
Doing this can make a difference. Didja know even if you only do it for a few minutes, it can have a lasting, positive effect? Well, now you know.
But don’t think I can’t hear you out there reacting and saying things like: “Get real! I live and work in a virtual world! I can’t always meet with people in person!”
Ok. I understand. I get it, but I’ve got questions for you. Do you spend a lot of time on conference calls? Do you multitask when you are on a conference call?
Come on, own up! I’ve bared my soul with you in this playbook. So be straight up and answer this question honestly! You multi-task, don’t you? You do other stuff when you are talking to people virtually!
That’s what I thought. You need a virtual stoop.
Here’s something to keep in mind the next time you are on an audio or video conference call and you let yourself become distracted. The person on the other end of the communication can sense that you are not really listening.
Yes, they can tell. Yes, this is a real thing. They know you’re not all there. How do I know this?
I have spent many years interviewing, having meetings, and coaching by phone. I could always tell when the person on the other end of call was distracted and had lost their connection with me.

How do you tell when someone is distracted when they are not right in front of you? The notes in their voice are off key. The tone they use when they respond doesn’t have the same depth and consistency. Simply put, their responses change when they are not fully present.

This happens when people try to speak to someone who is digitally distracted, as well. Pay attention the next time you are on a video conference call and you are sitting next to someone who has checked out. You can see that person is doing something else. They are digitally distracted.

Now listen carefully to the person’s voice who is speaking. You’ll hear his or her voice get a bit strained. They can sense that they have lost the connection with their listeners.

We humans are intuitive beings. We can tell when there has been a shift in energy. When you sit on the stoop you can tell when people are authentically present.

I don’t want to be one of those people who don’t really listen. And I want to help my people to not be one of those people, too. My Queensite guidance to myself (and you) is to practice full-on focus and side-by-side, in-your-space conversations.

Imagine you are sitting on the stoop next time you are on a conference call. Try it. See what happens when you make it a habit.

You might find your meetings and conversations shortening in length but improving in quality. Use the power of small things to make a difference in your communications and interactions.

It’s your secret sauce or your Sunday gravy, as we like to say in Queens. (This is what we call tomato with meat sauce.)

Practice the power of the full-on focus of the stoop to make a difference every day. It’s life changing.
Earth Acrostic
Nora Freeman

it’s our homE
  where we All live
let’s take caRe of it
don’t blow iT
  because wHere else would we go
Tree
Sheila Benedis

I want to grow
Reach the sun
Express my feelings
Exude joy
Heal the world
Show off my flowers in the spring
My scarlet coat in the fall
My covering of snow in the winter
I want to have control over my fate
Why should my life end suddenly?
Why should I become someone’s table?
Photo: Sea Coast, Ireland.
Kayla Henry
On the shoreline
The wind and I are one
My senses sharpen
No sound of earth
No sound of wind
No cry of a loon
No croak of a bull frog
No discordant external voices
I feel
isolation
joy in solitude
I come away knowing
What matters and what doesn’t matter

Among the beauties and mysteries
Of the earth
I am never alone
Or weary of life
I know at last what I am part of
That what I am part of matters
I express myself through art and poetry
I am mindful
In the present moment
I find encouragement for my journey
Embrace my goal
I am a spiritual person.
Desire fluttered on
My bedroom window
Riding on the wings
Of a Luna Moth

Weary from a long journey
A soft bed welcome dreams
A birds eye view
Of a vast field of blue
poppies

In the morning
Green silky wings lay
On the grey slate stairs
Leaving pity and sorrow
Jazz Singer
Kalila Abdur Razzaq
Music is Poetry
Christopha Moreland

Melodic strands
move cobwebs from
musty corners of my mind,
melt all sadness therein, to make light
my troubled heart. Meditative, as it washes o’er,
may Music so accompany until —
my final time is come.

Bird of Paradise (nature)
When I say your eye sees scabbard,
and mine the dagger, I mean this:

the bird-of-paradise planted
in our garden. Under our breath

shift the cliffs of the Rift,
its steep sides a quiver of blades

sharp as our ancestors’ teeth.
We walk the ridge, wedged

between sky and rock, peaks
alight, the god-fires of night

behind us. Come morning,
a strange bird rises in flight

yellow dagger slicing
through the early slanted light.
At the Train Stop

Lenard Moore

I imagine the quick hand:
Thelonious Monk waves
at red, orange, yellow leaves
from Raleigh to Rocky Mount.
Alone in this seat,
I peer out the half-window
at the rainbow of faces
bent toward this train
that runs to the irresistible Apple,
determine to imagine Monk
glows like Carolina sun
in cloudless blue sky.
I try so hard to picture him
until his specter hunkers
at the ghost piano, foxfire
on concrete platform.
Now I can hear the tune ‘Misterioso’
float on sunlit air.
If notes were visible,
perhaps they would drift crimson,
shimmer like autumn leaves.
A hunch shudders
into evening, a wordless flight.
I didn’t pick up the tenor
and soprano saxophones
for legendhood.
I wanted only to explore chords
into progression, step into another world
I had to escape anything too strict,
take ‘Giant Steps’ all the way
from Hamlet, North Carolina.
The music shimmered like a lake
inside me and turned blue.
It was kind of spiritual.
I thought of extending the scales.
I wanted to play on and on,
sail as long as the horn could
and eventually come back again
as if I had never left.
It was maybe the only time
I left my body.
The Great Vowel Shift
Ink on paper
Russell Evans
2021