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# THE GRID ELEGIES

by

PAMELA KALLIMANIS

A master's capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in International Migration  
Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,  
The City University of New York

2021

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The Grid Elegies

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Pamela Kallimanis

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in International Migration Studies in satisfaction of the capstone project requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Grid Elegies

by

Pamela Kallimanis

Advisor: Jamie Longazel

Immigrants are a key component in New York City's pandemic. Historically, New York is a city of immigrants and their children. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, more immigrants arrived due to changes in migration policy. There was also an increased outmigration through second and third generations, which mirrors an economic trajectory seen in previous points in history, mainly in the 1970s. At that time, there was the lure of government policies – from federal mortgage agencies that graded white suburban areas as safer areas for banks to make loans than racially mixed urban areas, to road construction that literally paved the way for an outflow from the city (Jackson, 1987). This collection attempts to narrate the flow of migrants in New York City and its Eastern suburban sprawl throughout time, with a consideration of the natural formation of the land and its peoples. The capstone originated in unexpected study during the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City where the work asks the question, does New York's moving population of immigrants change when they move here, and how do people on the move change the land?

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## Introduction: A Conceptualization of Time and Place

Growing populations in cities lead to disease and contagion as the pandemic of Coronavirus or COVID-19 has proven to be quite a study in these physical connections that people have to one another. Conceptually, let's focus on one place: New York City. New Yorkers live in cramped quarters. During the 2020 elections, Donald Trump routinely stated that New York is a ghost town. The *New York Times* quotes him, "For so many years I loved it, it was vibrant. It's dying, everyone is leaving New York." Even though the space is limited and the city was quarantined, Trump's observations were raises some questions about what makes a living or dying global city. Throughout history, population increases. Also, in the global cities index, New York proves a paradox. If the city is dying, why does it continue to grow? Thus, within Trump's negative and pessimistic analysis of the gateway city, he's referring to one population. Yet, when looking to immigrant communities, migrants in the urban experience, there is a significant portion of the population foreign-born, New Yorkers living and working during the pandemic. Though Trump's specific and legitimate dismay may be empirically true in that certain New Yorkers are leaving, they are mostly the professional class or the elite, heading off to second homes, purchasing second homes in an attempt to flee the virus. Trump's assumption, which echoes the 1970s is that the only people worth noting are those in the professional class or the elites who see the pandemic as a time to escape. What one who holds this opinion may fail to understand is the long history of governments underestimating immigrants and their children in New York City. At other points in time, of course, New York's political and cultural elite had fled to the



Eastern suburbs, the city finds itself again the a “challenge unexpected or outrageous.”  
(Glazer and Moynihan, 1963)

After a while, in 2021, the number of vaccinations increases in the city, and there is enough evidence to believe that New York’s position in the global index in 2021 will improve, in which the data referred to dimensions of financial, real estate and cultural measures.

At one point, New York City’s chief demographer in the twenty-first century explains the historical view from the 1970s to the present saying that New York City was in the throes of a major crisis. The city was broke. There were a lot of people who were down on the city and a tremendous loss of population. In looking at trends for New York City, there is a decrease in the population from 7.9 million people it went all the way down to 7.1 million people in the course of a single decade. At the same time, 800,000 immigrants came to the city. It was true that New York City was in terrible shape, but it also offered many opportunities for new arrivals. Paradoxically, at the moment when there was white exodus and white flight, the same city rose up and prospered, largely on the backs of immigrants. So, we have been in this cycle before. (Correal, 2021) In the case of the present fluctuations of immigrants into New York City.

One way of understanding immigrant receiving cities is through the Kearney Index of Global Cities. According to one of the researchers, New York City and London has long dominated the first and second spots based upon many variables such as education opportunities, workforce participation, cultural access, food and dining as well as citizenship and worker permits. At the start of the pandemic, Global Cities Outlook did show New York City ranking only in the top 20, at number 17, plunging a bit

because of the initial infection rates. In 2021, a revision of the Global Cities Outlook affirms just how New York transcended the data from 2020 and improved slightly its once premier spot on the list. (Kearney, 2021) Likely, the next few years will indicate where renewed neighborhoods of immigrant businesses may also perform for the success of a post-pandemic city. After considering immigration and commerce through various historians and migration scholars, what followed was a question about the social forces and actors in these neighborhoods, and in this collection is a question about who causes the land to change and how does the land and its development change migrant populations?

Consequently, what's presented in this collection is in an attempt to create a narrative about the disappearing land mass and natural species in relation to colonization, immigration and real estate, including some of the more pressing social and political ideas such as how New York remains a city which offers support and assistance to new arrivals which includes settlement houses, churches and synagogues, hospitals and labor unions. (Foner) In looking at the body of literature in such fields, social scientists and their work demonstrates the immigrant experience in the new millennium. Moreover, this collection examines the paradox that makes New York a thriving immigrant receiving city in spite of the rhetoric against optimism. In addition, this collection evaluates some of the broad ideology of New York's immigrants, from documents and historical context, about population trends, examining some neighborhoods Brooklyn and Queens up close, and reading maps at the New York Botanical Garden, research from the Welikia project, Benjamin Ross in his discussion of suburban sprawl, Douglas Massey's research on boundaries and migration within the

comprehensive history of New York City in *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1895*. Within the poems' collection, there is another ideology suggested in the epigraphs on the poems by such writers as these and more.

The poems enter into a conversation that makes sense which includes musing about land and how such people can be informed by ecological structures. These features are initially what made New York's lower Manhattan the epicenter as a great receiving city, a transformed space and the survivalist notions that remain. In contrast to the notion that New York is dying, it is more factual that New York City will always survive, but just how will it do that if projections about water and the threat of flooding may obliterate some neighborhoods. It's my contention that New York will survive, likely to look very different than the city it is in 2021, but certainly it looks very different from 1804 when the grid was first laid down.

By proposing a new lens in which to consider migration, the writing here suggests poetic narration, mostly in the sense that poetry can express and intone complexities in the metanarrative, feelings, senses, longings and responses to the environment. Such is the immigrant story in relation to the land structures within the grid, and the archives might reveal how attitudes and customs do not simply fade away; they shape, often in a complex fashion, how individuals in groups adjusted to develop new cultural patterns in New York City. Along with the cultural patterns, there were environmental patterns, a moving to the East into Queens, Brooklyn and Long Island. Because of the natural features, New York City, with its three rivers and the vast Atlantic Ocean, is still a well sought out destination of many ambitious people, college students along with commercial industries. While many people are leaving the inner urban

center before and after the pandemic, the effects on the natural landscape and species of birds and wildlife have permanently altered the population and vice versa since the earliest maps of the grid.

What this project cannot do is present social science data empirically. Instead, the capstone project herewith has been progressively influenced by a central research question: how do the people change the land? And how does the land change the people? Articles and literature that looked at flows of migrants were consulted as well as topography, historical accounts of politics and other psycho-social information throughout the history, anthropology, sociology, literature and popular news sources lead to the central themes in this collection. These sources were consulted to create a narrative, a truth-telling of sorts, surrounding the relationship between the natural environment and New York's flows of migrants from the center of Manhattan to the suburbs.

In addition to a discussion of lost species, there are also poems which figure a conceptualization of the context of time passing. Dates, therefore are referenced, major news stories in some cases, migrant groups and regional features about the grid. Different periods of New York's history and then its surrounding suburbs have changed in regard to the population of immigrants and to the natural features of the land. For much of the discussion, the poems are making a point that has to do with the laying of concrete grid. From a consideration of urban theory that cities are living entities as the work of Saskia Sassen studies architecture and the intersectionality of environment and population in global cities. Recapturing the geography of places involved in globalization allows us to recapture people, workers, communities, and more

specifically, the many different cultures involved in the work of globalization. The poems are ambitiously examining this research agenda influenced by current urban theory, one that goes beyond the now familiar focus on cross-border flows of goods, capital, and information. (Sassen, 2005) In the narrative is the idea that New York City's grid has living and moving flows of people and goods. As well as commerce, six of the poems discuss data from the indexes of global cities. Implying in this case, the addition of the loss of natural environment and migrant flows is presented here as a central thesis.

To narrate these early migrant flows, specifically in New York, before the arrival European immigrants, there were indigenous people who lived on the land, the Lenape. Historical research reported in the Welikia program notes that they spent the summers near The Accabonac on Eastern Long Island, and in the winter, they camped in Manhattan. History shows evidence of controlled burns and other features in the management of plant species, fishing and hunting. In terms of wildlife rivers, bird populations and plant species, Welikia project (Explore Welikia, 2019) shows the topography of the region before the grid was laid. In response to this research, some of the poems here lend story-telling to the historical research about how land management was important to the Lenape, and in what ways the Summer and Winter hunting grounds varied. This is one example of how the poems are narratively and conceptual seeking to respond to recollections in history. In all, this collection engages sociological study, when the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted access to the Botanical Gardens Library and other research sites with a framework to cross reference with environmental changes, and superimpose the study of which groups of immigrants were moving about

in the city and its suburbs. Poems in the collection respond to the movement asking what might one learn about topography, animal and plant species and how migrant flows intersect with suburbanization and urban sprawl to prepare for the climate changes expected in the next 50 years?

Another piece of the conversation was collected in The Wildlife Conservation Society which had started a project called the Manahatta Project then renamed the Welikia which means “my good home” in Lenape, the original Native American language of the region. The goal of the Wildlife Conservation’s project is discovering something new about a place we all know so well, whether we live in New York or see it on television, and, through that discovery, to alter our way of life. New York does not lack for dystopian visions of the future. But what is the vision of the future that works? Might it lie in Mannahatta, the green heart of New York, and with a new start to history, a few hours before Hudson arrived that sunny afternoon four hundred years ago? (Explore Welikia, 2019) In addition to the Welikia project, archival maps and topographical information at the Botanical Gardens of New York City examined were noting the changes in landscape for Lower Manhattan’s water ways, estuaries, ponds, other topographical features before the laying of the grid. For example, Greenwich Village was named because it was a Pine Barrens. Building housing and the changes of New York’s streets, even in the earliest designs of architecture set about to create one of the world’s first global cities. Imagine an overlay of these resources: topographical maps, images of migrant flows, and then the speaker of the poem discussing and advocating for some kind of truth in regard to the past, as though the

speaker is the approaching the fourth wall in a theatrical performance, telling the story with the maps and figures as the back story.

For example, one historical document describes the people as *a deprived population* which on one hand is motivated by finance and a lack of social services on the other hand in the middle of the 1970's. (Rosen, 1998) To think of that as a changing sense of what is acceptable behavior, living in cities definitely changed human behavior and when the first colonizers arrived on the shores of Manhattan, much of the motivation was contradictory. The earliest arrivals and the first wave of immigrants established a group identity in New York City, it's a city of dreamers and contradiction: growth and demise; life and death. One theme throughout reading historical accounts and then sociological studies is about the second generation as a group identity which can be described as such at Kasinitz et al. or Nancy Foner's *One Out of Three* which characterizes New York as an immigrant receiving city. New York has always been a receiving city and has been at the top of the global cities index. Due to flows of immigrants themselves and the interactions of such varied demography, the conceptual notion that cities are living organisms is explored in this project. For one, how did the grid allow for more people to move and work in the global city? Secondly, what cultural and historical dimensions changed as the migrants leaving the urban center and going into the suburbs just after the second world war, in Brooklyn, to Long Island, to the East has shaped an urban identity as New Yorkers and first, second or third generation immigrants. In addition to these questions, a consideration of race, ethnicity and belonging was a theme having to do with the ebb and flow of urban social life on the streets and the sustainability of industry as every city's goal of being resilient, most

especially this is true about New York City. Each street and each wave of immigrants into the suburbs tells a different story. Enriched by successive waves and forms of globalization, threatened at one time by abandonment and at another by gentrification, [ ] streets reflect changing demographics. (Zukin et al.) For all of these reasons, and also the laying of the concrete and paving over the city are the forces that might lead to a city's death. In other words, natural features die, but the social and political gain of the general population of immigrant people increases. Where other cities may indicate the loss of natural wildlife as a sign of demise, instead, New York and its people and even its wildlife display grit, survival, both natural species and human in which only the fittest survive. In New York, the natural features may have been altered, but many humans became successful. (Kieran, 1982) Indeed, many New Yorkers have a sense of place in the urban environment. Certainly, the city continues to draw from a population of the highest achievers, the city that never sleeps and other such drives which are reflected in popular culture. Imagine Sinatra's song: If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere or the more modern version, Jay Z's "concrete jungle where dreams are made of."

Conceptually and ideologically, one might disagree with the notion that New York is a dying city, but it was also true that during the pandemic, the Global Cities Index and the Global Cities Outlook showed New York moving from first or second place to seventeenth. The index looks at dimensions such as The GCI assesses how globally engaged cities are across five dimensions: business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience, and political engagement. (Kearney, 2021) However, this kind of premature report in 2020 was based upon data in the middle of 2020 and examined various cities and their responses to the initial pandemic numbers. At the



time, it may have been just too early to tell. It seems more likely that what's been true about New York City from its earliest immigrants is that its people are ambitious and because of that, the City is very likely to survive through the pandemic and to recover. Even after the major attack on Lower Manhattan and its economic realities, New York remains a receiving city for new immigrants. These measurements of human capital and migrants' contributions to the cultural landscape of New York are themes held within this project.

Poems herewith are engaging in a dialogue with the empirical research and with essays and other historical narratives about the center of the city and its sprawl. With regard for the plant and animal species, even though a brief look at declining habitats reveals that the grasses and shrubs have disappeared most especially since the mid-1980s. Many species, however, have been surviving as well. These are resilient trees that grow out of cement, grasses and shrubs which are surviving with less air as New York City has less oxygen in the air and higher levels of pollution. And with regard to the grid, there has not been a source of fresh water in New York since the laying of the original grid in 1804. Instead, a series of aqueducts and lakes bring fresh water down from the North. Even so, many tens of thousands of people and wildlife species manage to survive during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century, the Hudson River was hypoxic, not to mention the oysters and the loss of many species of birds. More specifically to illustrate this point, by 1700 New York had a population of almost 5,000 and it continued to grow rapidly. By 1776 the population was about 25,000. In 1800, New York City had about 60,000 inhabitants. In the 18th century the main industry in New York was milling. Virtually all of the natural features of the city have been changed

so much that plant species can survive without soil, bird populations thrive by surviving on garbage, and people can live here even though the air is lacking normal oxygen levels. Speculation on the effects of such new citizens into lower Manhattan and the outmigration flows presented certain topographical and architectural features. In other words, the sheer numbers of inhabitants changed the physical features of the land, affected by real estate development, generating environmental shifts for the biome and such early industrialization generated toxic chemicals changed the landscape.

In its conceptual artistry, the collection imagines the overlay of the maps with historical and topographical features in the compendium of New York's natural history all of which will make for a beginning conversation to narrate the place and people. For example, in Lower Manhattan, the Common Pond was polluted by the tanneries. There are two major pragmatic concerns in New York City: filth and finance (Kieran, 1982) which then is one of the poems in the collection. The idea that one of the most pressing issues about urban life in New York City is the management of the waste from real estate development, business activity, and life on the streets remains. Just where does all that trash go? Historically, there have been major political and social movements to manage the filth created by the financial district. At one point in the nineteenth century, one of the first millionaires in New York City brought trash to Brooklyn and soil for landfill projects into Manhattan. (Kieran, 1982) Wealth, political gain, financial investors, foreign-born migrants at the center of New York's cultural capital is likewise a paradox, because New York is separated from the rest of the country's landmass. So, just what makes this successful cultural and financial capital?

On the other side of the economic and ideological binary, in New York's ghettos, the creation of the partitioned groups of poor and those who represented otherness has been well documented in literature and in historical documents. In New York, Black and immigrant workers were found living in a paradox in lower Manhattan. For some, the city's indwelling place of isolation provided cultural capital (Duneier M. P., 2014) and for other groups there was a concentration of deprivation of resources. Likewise, into the twentieth century, industrialization concentrated poor workers and immigrants in what Loic Wacquant termed "Hyperghetto" in which the causes of the hyperghettoization of the inner city involve complex and dynamic concatenation of economic and political factors operating over the whole postwar era that belies the simplistic, short-term plot of the underclass tale. (Polity, 2008) While it's important to see that this theory came about in the decades of globalization of New York. Likely, this fundamental separation of the classes and races took place in the earliest days in New York's Lower Manhattan where entrepreneurship, government systems and social organization offered a structural feature of the American economy, a polarized labor demand and a gulf between high-wage and low-paying jobs which speaks to the ways that the people affect the land. As a result of these systems, immigrant groups move up and out to Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Thus, there's a historical flow of migrants into the suburbs. One side note then is also, the divide between immigrants and Blacks, which indicates an ever-widening polarized life characterized by federal policies that reshaped the fate of the immigrant groups and native-born Blacks. Thus, one may ask the question about Black populations and how immigrant groups interacted and performed in relation to this

question of what is most consequential for Black workers, is the continued social phenomenon of immigrants moving up and out reinforced social conditions which have been historically dependent on federal policies such as redlining as well as local, state and federal housing policies that mandated segregation? As such, the Federal Housing Administration, which was established in 1934, furthered the segregation efforts by refusing to insure mortgages in and near African-American neighborhoods — a policy known as "redlining." At the same time, the FHA was subsidizing builders who were mass-producing entire subdivisions for whites — with the requirement that none of the homes be sold to African-Americans.

In looking at the environment, one might include some conversation about policies and social interactions can affect group and individual identity as a result. When people are segregated and refused financial agency, a sense of being outside is pervasive. African-American families that were prohibited from buying homes in the suburbs in the 1940s and '50s and even into the '60s, by the FHA, gained none of the equity appreciation that whites gained. Consider the works within Migration Studies, such as Richard Alba who writes about the ascent of an African American to the highest level of the executive branch in Baraka Obama's candidacy and victory which he describes as transformational and confirmation of tidal shifts that, researchers had presumed, have quietly been taking place below the surface of the turbulent sear of racial attitudes. In Richard Alba's book, "Blurring the Color Line" he brings together the newer research on ethno-racial divides in the United States. (Alba, 2009) His research shows the concentration of nonwhites bulging in the bottom on American social structure with an increasing fluidity into the upper reaches of society. Likewise, his

colleague Nancy Foner produced a book of narratives and research demonstrating the sheer numbers of foreign-born in her reporting that one out of three twenty-first century New Yorkers is foreign born, and by looking further than human capital and economic incorporation, New York City's immigrant's newest members are as follows:

Dominicans, Chinese, Jamaicans, Liberians and finally Mexicans which is the third largest immigrant group in New York City Official Statistics in the beginning of the new millennium. (Foner, 2013) As the immigrants play a central role in revitalizing neighborhoods so, too, other forces are closing businesses and affecting the Central and South Americans, Indian and Korean immigrants who join a native-born population that is white and substantial. Enter then, Phil Kasinitz and Richard Ocejo's work which looks at these white populations and by studying companies, bars and other scenes in problematic advancing gentrification, in which one can learn much about collective place identity and the immigrant second generation. In these studies as well as the work of Van Tran (CUNY), lives, conflicts, contested meaning among people who live, work and visit downtown Manhattan and its Eastern suburbs reveal regulars and rootless newcomers and visitors, and people with diverse understandings of place and community which uneasily coexist. (Ocejo, Night and Day, 2014) Without the suggested of uneasiness and urban outliers, the collection herewith would not have been informed in the more pressing immigration divides and conquers taking place in the area. Such narratives in the book, *Undocumented Fears* (Longazel, 2016) which uses unconventional balance of text and notes to maximize reach to its audience. In that collection, the author focuses on one region and one event, such is the similar idea in *The Zero Elegies*. In the poems within the story of one event in New York City, that

book focuses on place and poetry for that place in a moment in time: September 11, 2001. So, too, does this collection move through space and time regarding the influences of early immigration, politics and finally of violence in Lower Manhattan and its Eastern suburban sprawl.

Because my first book is a discussion in some ways about how people see themselves, the first collection of poems was exploring how the loss of a space affected a sense of identity for New Yorkers. That collection was titled, *The Zero Elegies*. In it, I was concerned with how psycho-social and environment factors can shape identity for individuals and groups. Mainly, I was asking the question, “If the Towers are gone, who are we?” At the time, I sensed that there would need to be another discussion – rather than to focus on one moment in time, I wanted to look at New York through time. The conceptualization of this collection is to move through time – but it was hard to determine when time began for New York City. Thus, in this collection, I’ve engaged in a discussion of the maps and the natural species. In addition, some consideration of historical and governmental policy must surely be included. Finally, I was aware that any consideration of migrants and their influences over the land would be incomplete with some section to focus on New York and its suburbanization throughout history. At one point, following penalties for hiring illegal immigrants, small communities in the suburbs paraded legislation against working-class immigrants. Across the United States in recent decades, economic factors have pushed many immigrants, mostly from Latin America, away from traditional “gateway” destinations and into small, interior cities and towns. By looking closely again at the main receiving city of New York, immigrants who

arrived to work in the factories and businesses in and around the city are pooled into a circumstance of affecting the environment.

Another ideological musing is about the current gentrification. How does white outmigration in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century shape the land? Which species disappeared? And finally, how does the ecological crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century inform decisions or not about real estate, migrant neighborhoods, migrant chain economic communities and the like? Possibly, the ambition of the poems is to raise awareness, to narrate the movements, and to propose a new ideology for examining the forces that reshaped the environment for a study of the features of the American Identity, specifically in Manhattan and the Eastern Suburbs.

To tell the story, in the limited scope of a small project of poems, the concept is an overlay, after the movements across the East River, the natural environment changed the people – displacing the locals and creating predominant white status quo. Moreover, the metanarrative is about place and land -- the scope of this project – there is the story-telling, the poems, looking at these documents and historical information with an eye towards the people who arrived and lived in this place called New York City. Some of the questions are about the water. A few of the poems are asking about neighborhoods and ethnic groups.

At some point, in considering the land, the poems turn to documents of urban planning, maps, plant species and an examination of migration into New York City and then outmigration to the suburbs. In this Capstone Project are the attempts to narrate as the poems are an artistic response to the remaking of New York City and its suburban sprawl. Some of the research consulted for narrative information are authors

like Duneier (Duneier M. , 2016), Kasinitz (Kasinitz & Rosenberg, Missing the Connection: Social Isolation and Employment on the Brooklyn Waterfront, 1996), Anderson (Anderson, 2015)– looking at Black spaces and a consideration of white space and the color line, discrimination, prejudice, racism and segregation. Other, more astute scholars have documented how white urbanites often have symbolic interest in the making of this racial hierarchy (Anderson 19). In relating to the broader themes of people and space, these narrations and iterations of a life on the streets and the blocks of the grid are coming together as one more area in which to discuss one of the top global cities in the world. In the poems, the immense commitment to New Yorkers as survivalists is hard to conceal. The motivations for the first book and now this collection remain, a critical eye towards who is here and who is gone? Questions about growing up in the suburbs, the third generation of a white immigrant family, the personal experience growing up in a town that is Black on Long Island. My hometown's largest ethnic groups are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (29.2%), White (Non-Hispanic) (24.6%), White (Hispanic) (18.2%), Two+ (Hispanic) (11.2%), and Other (Hispanic) (9.96%). (Census, 2021) Being a whiter kid in a Black town definitely introduced me to a different way of seeing the world than many of my white counterparts, especially having stayed after white flight. The experience is that there are quite possibly two societies – a division in America and even in New York's suburbs of the color line. Admittedly, I had no idea that I was crossing a color line. The influences of churches and other associations, courthouses, workplaces and universities, white society's upward mobility and the up and out migration of many provided the foundational prejudices in New York City. One must admit that there is a



color line and that New York – though the myth of identity is that it is “Melting Pot,” New York is one of the most segregated cities. (Kasinitz P. , Lecture: Race and Ethnicity, 2020) In trying to put a narrative on this experience, the notion that there is an unofficial ruling class in New York’s elite, of which the city in the last few decades had an influx of white urban professionals on the rise.

However, in this collection, the idea that there has been a movement towards gentrification belies the incorporation of white immigrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the migration policies of the United States changed after 1965, many other nationalities arrived. Thus, it is not just a twentieth century migration story. For two centuries, New York society has undergone major processes in which large numbers of urban ghetto dwellers moved into settings previously occupied by native people – and eventually, massive movement of outmigration through government real estate development and practices in the work of Robert Moses and subsequent embattlement of Lower Manhattan with the efforts of the social reformer Jane Jacobs typically regard the civil society and its study of features in identity and space. (Kasinitz P. , Lecture: Race and Ethnicity, 2020) Of these questions, the poems are multinarrative, a collection of speakers exploring identity and its spatial considerations. In other words, these are dramatic representations and responses to writers and researchers, a conceptual discourse with the past. And if the birds and plants are gone, what has replaced them? And if the people came from all over with cultural capital and financial processes, how does the land absorb so many people? And how do the people change the very land once they arrive and then move into the suburbs and farmland?

Somewhere in the process of looking at the myth and the facts, an ideology of environment and ecology arose for migration flows, more questions came to mind: what created a ghetto in the urban environment and where are the trees, flowers and farms? How much and in what real estate developments or projects does the land and its resources intersect with the security and identity of the people on the land? Is there interrelationship of the natural setting which was shaped and influenced by and among those arriving? At the same time, the immigrants changed the environment.

East of New York City, there is a linguistic element in one of the areas on the East End in which there's a word: Bonacker. This word is from the local indigenous people: the Shinnecock. The term "Bonacker" is a name that many white immigrants were given in the seventeenth century when East Hampton was a theocracy, the local churches governed the area such as East Hampton Presbyterian Church. The local pastors were de facto leaders of the town. Reminiscent of these founding ethics, even into the twenty-first century, local whites claim as their hierarchical and paternalistic social organizations with high instances of anti-Hispanic sentiment, nearly no affordable housing, a lack of public transportation and the like. Thus, this underrepresented ethnic identity is surprising in this day and age. However, the Hispanic Community is beginning to organize under the leadership of a Community Activist, Lisa Votino. Still, the self-determination of ethnics has had minimal impact on the sense of belonging, and the status quo on the East End of Long Island is one of privilege and whiteness. The locals call themselves "Bonackers" which has its roots in Accabonac Harbor in which the earliest immigrants in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century lived in the Springs. The idea that these Bonackers are now the "locals" is an ongoing sentiment. Locals have bumper

stickers on their cars that are supportive of this closed identity such as “Summer People, Some are Not.” One woman reported that she indeed was not a Bonacker, “If you haven’t been born here or if you haven’t given birth here, you’re just a visitor.” The idea that someone three decades into living in a place is still not considered a local is exactly what the poems are looking to say, that there is some kind of remaining idea about who belongs in New York and who must remain on the outside of that belonging. In general, white immigrants, though they themselves are immigrants to Long Island, do not see themselves as outsiders in these towns, and it would be really interesting to spend more time interviewing them to see why. There are even linguistical phrases within Bonac culture such as *upisland* which is used to this day to describe anything West of the Shinnecock Canal, and the indigenous tribe has only recently been granted status.

Like immigrants to the East End, early migrations to the outer boroughs and Western Nassau County have produced a white class of people that have a separate sense of identity even though they are immigrants of the third generation often migrating from New York. These suburbs are often red in voting which is another indication that they are different from the urban center. For recent immigrants, there has been a system of racialization with the development of I.C.E. raids and a culture of exclusionary practices. During the Trump Era, these areas were considered to be largely overrun by Salvadorean gangs and there was gang violence which contributed to vilification of the newer arrivals. In immigration studies and continued research in the niches of developments such arrivals are affected in areas of real estate, banking, security, hotels and motels, and other services to a varying degree provided large sectors of the

mainstream economy in the suburbs while human capital for Blacks and other ethnic immigrants was out of reach. For Black New Yorkers, each wave of immigrants passed over them, on the outside of the mainstream, while Blacks get pushed further into the ghetto. (Kasinitz P. , Lecture: Race and Ethnicity, 2020) White immigrants moved away from the urban center during the 1950s and the suburbanization of New York and the projects of Robert Moses. The work of Alba and Foner, and then Ocejo, Longazel and Kasinitz, provide a balance to the discussion of division of society, the changing face of the color line, the continued persecution of the newest arrivals and the streets and how its owned and present in New York identity. So, the additional ideological analysis is one of the flow of life and the natural habitat. How does that decline in nature affect the identity?

In terms of the historical nature of these flows, even before the suburbanization, the indigenous people, and the natural environment in New York and Long Island suffered tremendous destruction – loss of many species of animals and plants in addition to the ever-growing use of landfill in lower Manhattan and then movements into the Eastern suburbs. Much of the destruction of the natural environment was documented, as the Hudson River became so toxic that the fish couldn't survive as well as the disappearing oysters and it's hard to imagine that Lower Manhattan was home to over 500 species of birds even though there's this idea of survival of the fittest and the smartest in New York City. One does not see 500 hundred species of birds or large flocks of birds in the city any more. We used to have cities that were teeming with wildlife, birds, insects, plant species and grasses. (Matthews, 2021) Now, we're lucky to see Sparrows, Pigeons and other aviaries. Here is a story to tell, with empirical

evidence in historical and sociological research. The titles of the poems indicate the major themes of the people and the land, and in the subsections, poems working with concepts like ethnography, hyperghettoization, and the found African burial ground in lower Manhattan. As far as species and the natural environment, poems look at pine tree species, lost oysters, Queen streets polluted well as a historical landmark. In terms of academic work, the methods in this project are mostly a survey of literature, maps, interviews and other source material. A conceptual response is the story, coming out of the historical documents, interviews and readings in the sociological literature as well as an idea that there could be a theoretical overlay of the natural environment along with the study of migrant flows from the urban center into the Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, Western Nassau County – some discussion of the Villages and finally the notion of The End (Montauk.) Broadly speaking, in its conceptualization, the poems are one writer's response to social developments of Manhattan's economic and architectural spaces to ask the question, how did the land change the people and how did the people change the land?

## Part I: The People

## Slave owning and Capitalism

*“Despite positive social change and the growth of the black middle class, it is still the case that when encountering blacks in the white space, some whites experience cognitive dissonance and, if for no other reason than the need to set the dissonant picture straight, become confused or disturbed or even outraged at what they see.”*  
Anderson, 14

Whites started with a diseased metaphor, a new world and the presence of white space for consonance, they try to put the black person, “Back in your place.” in no uncertain terms to “go back to where you came from.”

To remember, to gather  
To dismember, to separate

Had to remember, perhaps that whites and blacks decided that there should be a constancy of racial superiority with which policing, in whose kitchen, among whose children or between consenting adults.

Blacks reflectively noted the proportion of other blacks with whom to commune or bond.

There was an unholiness to the socialness.  
A frequency of Cholera and disease.  
Ethnic groups. Reality.  
For instance, the vibrant “orange fringed orchid” once proliferated in New York City.

Each interaction was the 1606 closed down and friendly landlady. The best business was criminal and immoral.

## **There Wasn't Language For It**

The look of the projects

but talking about the white man didn't rule out "the liberals."

And words didn't really express the idea that councils funded and abetted the mobs.

Kevin Morris mentions communities,

but empirical evidence may ascertain a wee bit of newcomer logic.

In opposition to the wages of government, neighborhoods sprung up.

Democracy was a notion.

Slave owners and homeowners were concentrated in one spot.

It was islands of renewal and seeds of decay.

Brooklyn or Amsterdam – major trends being what they were – political gentrification indicated a substantial idea.

Newcomer communities have a distinct identity –

markets, gay people, hipsters and recent phenomena.

Living in a post-1970s post racial world

the progression of the facts was as such: taxes, community, and real estate.



## The Tenth Ward

*How the other half lives, "Jewtown" by Jacob Riis:*

*Many harsh claims are made against the 75,000 Jews*

*Poverty are the bands of sympathy.*

Miriam came into the work, travelled uptown  
and rose out of the First Avenue nights, where there was fire panic  
and a wild struggle in the "pig market." Polish Jews in the Mulberry Bend  
near Hester and down to Ludlow Streets

The authorities collect taxes and levy accusations in the schools against  
the children – Jews and Italians in the crowded tenements  
poverty as the bonds of sympathy between them, yet a real human pettiness  
of a caste system began as well, immigrant ethnic identities.

And the jokes, "What's a dead rabbi?" asks one.

"One less pair of feet on the street," says the other.

Hawkers, seeing it all

selling it all

a half or a quarter chicken on Governor Slip: horseradish, butcher stands,

part peddler wagon and part storefront

ash barrels – planks of rows and rows of selling stretches

South and West as far as the eye can see.

## **Descriptive Ethnography**

Five-story tenements on Second Avenue – the elevated railroad at Chatham Square, Jacob Riis explains this as the “Sweater District” and proprieties do not count on the Eastside –

He mentioned dialects – streets with various staggering English and Yiddish, tenement descriptions of red-hot stores and piece makers, clothing, Coffee, potatoes and pickles.

One imagines the dim lighting, rancid air. At the time, the health department was concerned the tenement dwellers might die from eating dry bread and pickles. Imagine families clearing twelve dollars a week, 42 cents per doze pants sewn and a general public sentiment, turnings its nose at the vicious foreigner for whose perverted notions, the room is in the land of the plenty. (98 Riis)

## Amiri Baraka

Leroi Jones. He asked me, "Why are y'all acting like you never seen this before?"

/all renamed as Baraka.

And this was a suspected subterfuge that working class whites  
shouldn't be invited to the BBQ.

The word may have

slipped

out, "N-word."

such as "F-word."

in a "Q-word world."

Virtually, every public encounter result in a degree of scrutiny  
that "Normal" white people do not need to endure profiles by authorities.

Nobody stops the white man.

Imagine as he slaps his name over the tax documents

Yet, friends, yes – these were esteemed and distinguished Lenape/People

Black persons negotiated their status

even as one named Barack

rose to the highest office in the land

which simply antagonized the consonance – allayed battle lines,

stoked fires of discontent, enraged religious zealotry – those hijackers of faith.

In less time than we could have imagined, not even five years –

the world would witness the American illusion

of the gloomy hedges of division, race, immigrants and identity.

## Whitman

O, to be Whitman  
tears cut a track across the center of his face  
down into his skin, seep into the crevasses  
in which the skin itches and the ticks  
dropped from a thrown dish  
a car crash, a broken door hinge  
slammed into the strangers' bumper

smoke a joint  
take a shot  
punch a dog  
kick the cat  
fly in the face of heteronormativity

No. O, to tell  
and scream  
until the glass panes shake  
and rivets burst from a broken place  
and books land on a heap  
and what is lost at sea  
and so many broken bed frames  
and piano keys

O, one will never arrive  
at the destination  
of good and over and done

## White Space Invades The Ghetto: 1990 – 2010

### Part one.

Dr. J. G. Arvin – a surgeon.

He lives in Hoboken. He drives a Volvo.

He crosses over the bridge to Washington Heights.

He gardens on weekends.

He and Deborah go out for a beer,  
occupying tables and chairs on the sidewalk  
at the brewery, the white invasion (Anderson)  
“Interlopers” or passersby  
sometimes they roll up on the sidewalk

the lyrics pour out of the speakers

“Too Short, The Ghetto”

*Trying to survive, tryin to stay alive...  
the ghetto, talkin' bout the ghetto...  
even though the street is bumpy, lights burnt out  
Dope fiends die with a pipe in their mouth*

Crushing a can of Old English 800 40-ounce,  
one guy spits on the ground  
and they get back into the van and drive off.

## White Space Invades The Ghetto: 1990 – 2010

### Part Two.

Masculine  
Hard  
Defiant  
Destructive

Feminine  
Baby Mama  
Dissolute  
Procreative

Reagan's "War on Welfare" ranks in the top five charges which did not even begin to dismantle (The Eradication of POVERTY.) Racial disparities. This was going from...

1976 – 1996 – 2006

RACE RIOTS

SILENT RIOTS

The question of immigrants

Babies and Welfare

Lower Class Blacks

Neglect and Public Hacks

Prisons Built at an Astounding Rate

Housing, Health and Permanent Place

The kids face a fragility, more intense, more economic, distance, from the white suburbanites

Results: HYPERGHETTOIZATION

WHITE BUBBLE

Ghetto is physical

Suburb is physical

Ghetto is social

Suburb is social

Ghetto is symbolic

Suburb is symbolic

"We ain't never seen a white lady who can dance like that."

"I didn't know Black people drank cappuccino."

## **The Dead**

### **Greenfield Cemetery**

Aerial surveys may be needed to determine  
what's left of the land? What happened to the species?  
First residents of the cemetery had wide plots  
and big crypts – and then there's a dividing line  
same as the city blocks – black people here. Poor people there.  
Much closer together.

One cousin died from AIDS,  
another from heroin overdose,  
one Aunt from Aneurysm  
an Uncle from heart disease  
the mom from Leukemia  
the grandmother from Ovarian cancer  
the grandfather went insane

which poet represents days gone by –  
and do they just keep going by  
endlessly changing the land  
endlessly claiming the dead



## Hyperghetto

*The causes of hyperghettoization of the inner city involve a complex and dynamic, concatenation of economic and political factors operating over the whole postwar that belies the simplistic, short term plot of the 'under class' tale. The most obvious – but not necessarily the most potent of these factors in the transition of the American economy from a closed, tightly integrated factory-centered Fordist system of production catering to a uniform mass market to a more open, decentralized, service-intensive system geared to increasingly differentiated consumption patterns. This structural shift was accompanied by dualization of the occupational structure and a hardening of the racial segmentation of the peripheral segments of the labour market ... and a de facto urban apartheid. (Wacquant, 2008)*

My kid was sent to the local high school, after doing a lot of drugs in the fancy DOE school – elite high school and finding that there wasn't going to be a high school that would take them because they had broken the rules and had a suspension. The next stop was the rehab high school – on the fifth floor, across from the psych ward – where the drugs had led to a nervous breakdown – and the rehab high school has a shit name, something like – Dignity or H.E.AL.T.H. We really thought the whole thing was bullshit. Anytime one of the kids was uncomfortable – they got to take a five-minute time out. The kids had a therapist and group therapy and then three classes. It was some real psychobabble shit, but my kid got asked to leave one day when they brought oranges and a kitchen knife to share said oranges – and all the pleading in the world with these folks – well – it couldn't save my kid's ass. So – they did a week's detention and then landed in the ghetto school. The principal is a saint. My thinking was this – you'll get it now. I wasn't too worried about what might happen because I'd grown up in one of those schools with a bad reputation. Sure enough. They did get it.

“Mom, the kids just want to get high.”

“Mom. Nobody cares. They don't think they're going anywhere.”

“Mom. You have to get through the metal detectors. And there's nobody in class most of the time.”

“Mom. I rapped today. Everybody on the bus was screaming, 'Ohkaayyy Charlie,' and I thought that was sort of fun.”

“Mom. Three of my new friends are pregnant.”

And that was the end of the ghetto school. Kid transferred to their FOURTH high school. And maybe I was right, but the experience was complete – kid went to the next school –

another restart – and they got great grades – and we didn't revisit the psych ward except for a short stint the following November.

What they learned in the ghetto school –

1. even though the kids were insane the teachers still tried.
  - a. lesson plans and all
2. how to suck their teeth
3. There are a lot of ways to communicate with one phrase, “Yo – that's crazy, yo.”

## Immigration: Ethnoburb

### New York versus Los Angeles

*Sending sources – where are they located exactly?*

*And where are these ethnic neighborhoods –*

*returned to as global enclaves, multiethnic and transnational*

*{ } and for foreign-born Hispanics of diverse national origins.*

*The natives are either white or black. (Zhou et al., 380)*

Living there – were the white working class, but did they move out?

What about living side by side? They aren't White or Black. There's opportunities for intimate social contact, but there is also tension.

Can I just mention there's absolute socio-economic suspension of work and school? Or can I ask what makes these kids so cool?

They found their own vibe – music, skateboards, a different kind of tribe mix and glide, so what's the catch?

An influx of working-class

folks and white people looking to dope

and somewhere along the way – hope

might pose a threat to the "American Way."

A reconceptualization of neighborhood change and residential mobility – New York versus Los Angeles.

## The Doubts

I thought maybe I would never doubt myself to be American –  
grey hairs and hollow belly  
and shallow water walks  
everyone I love has fallen to pieces

We lost so many  
of the family to something  
– blood, brain, barrenness.

What are the doubts? So many.  
I doubt my steady hand. I doubt my faith.  
In the night watch --- sleepiness and then doubt,  
I want to ask questions which nobody can answer.

Will we survive?  
How will the woods grow over our homes?  
Can we keep the dangers away?  
Do we need a gun?

Listen, she says. Do as I say, says she.

I am here to hear you.  
I have nowhere else to go.  
I lift my hand to your mouth  
says she and pours the river water into it.

You may not be here when these poems  
are finished, but I will always speak of you.  
This is the one fact I do not doubt.

## Part II: The Land

## **Pinus Rigida**

Pitch pine, scrubby forlorn straggly and rather disheveled in habit, especially in sandy windswept maritime habitats but tenacious and adaptable when other species would perish (Dirr's).

Pitch pine is prickly and dry. So is the soil  
and so are the people.

Every surface is pale and then, approaching the shores  
flashes of green and a lushness.

At one point, in the demarcation of space and time,  
the people walk and hunt fish.

The pines are ragged and interject –  
lifting up from the soil – opening a great push in the day.

Everything has a reason, as an old man  
steps over the sand –  
the frightened friends jump up  
and are on the river's edge. The notion of smoky weed  
and house and home and limb at risk.

Barren trees. Some kind of opening in the world  
swallowed them in a psychology of terror.

Nobody expected them to live one winter.  
No. Not one person thought they would survive.  
And most of the first group did not.  
The forlorn barrenness of Manhattan  
and the sandy pitches of the green golds  
gave them an unexpected interrupted grace.

## Wisconsin Southbound

*“Three natural forces have had greater impact upon the area than any other: the mighty Wisconsin Glacier, which slid southward from Hudson Bay 70,000 to 10,000 years ago to form a deep grinding sheath of ice over the area and reshape the land; the Hudson River, with its rich estuary and remarkable geological features; and the Atlantic Ocean, whose awesome hurricanes and storms periodically and continually alter the New York Coastline” (Thomas).*

Hurricanes have wrecked the ice and the sand in many eras  
of coastal history in an upended history  
pressed the surface to a wrinkle and pushed the underlying soil  
into the jammed traffic of reshaped land mass.

Mountains may have come from the southbound movement  
of the glacial ice, but it was a slow and continuous pressure.  
Sometimes the air over the lower Hudson has the same feature  
like a grief that hovers over the population swells.

At some point on the slide, the ice  
and the air meet in a stillness that is moveable and changeable  
to only the unseen geology, only the tiniest of rocks, minerals really,  
not quite sand, not quite soil, not quite material, and yet,  
these some thousands of imperceptible shifts  
grew into the cliffs of Inwood.

Long after the slide, in the cool stone cabins, a flame  
and the neighbors cross the street  
to knock on the door, carrying cured pork, a bottle of port wine

and some pease porridge as the wind rushes into the house.



## De Halve Moon

Henry Hudson's boat. September 2, 1609

*The actual founding of New York City occurred in 1615 when the New Netherland Company, a subsidiary of the Dutch East India Company chartered to make four voyages within a three-year limit, built a stone house on the lower tip of Manhattan Island. Around this stone house, the huts of traders sprang up. This was the inconspicuous beginning of the city and for some years there was no change in the scene. There was just the storehouse and the rude huts of a few hardy men who bartered with the Indians for furs (Kieran 3).*

Everything about New York is a barter.

Every single moment that one stands on the lower tip of Manhattan, the traders began to spring into their rudeness, small claims on the biggest places and all the while, someone is pushed out of the way – the beautiful creatures that flew in the air, the creeping critters on the sands below the ice in March. And, at some point, in May or June, when the grasses were about to spring from their seeds, stones were placed over them by the companies.

Nobody thought much about progress in the beginning. None were able to conserve the birds, and for some years – the harbor was still prolific and engorged with the natural.

It was only when the grease from the skins began to sink into the mud that the locals began to question the new habitants' storehouses. At first, they simply looked into the buildings – to see the skins, and the fat, but the blood would streak into the streets and hasn't stopped.

## The People

*“By 1500, Lenape have lived in the area of Greater New York City for 1,500 years. They call their homeland Lenapehoking.” (Mushabac and Wigan)*

“Land is the gift of the creator.”

Which creator makes the land in New York?

Which party is responsible for the area the people called Lenapehoking – because there is a new land being made in ways that don’t resemble the first waves, sandy marsh, soils and glacial deposits.

The newest construction is more angular and less ruddy.

The buildings going up are blue in color, more like steel than copper.

The brick and mortar are a darkness, a blacker brick than the local soils reddish and golden points.

1626. Construction of Fort Amsterdam begins at the southern tip of Manhattan. (Mushabac and Wigan 7)

The lightness begins to shift, shadows fall in places where there had been sun streaks.

The birds lift off the tops of the workhouse.

1626. Eleven African men, probably captured from Spanish or Portuguese ships, are brought to New Amsterdam to labor as slaves for the Dutch West India Company. (Mushabac and Wigan 7)

And the labor force arrives

at the same time the rookeries are emptied out.

Birds seeking life somewhere beyond the shore

and the feathered inhabitants leave the coast of the islands

moving across the Hudson to New Jersey

so many species of shorebirds and crows vacated

to greener shores leaving the gulls to their trash.

Imagine the walls of Fort Amsterdam which rose  
from the rocks and sewage  
and all the while – in some new formed rule –  
the strong backs of slave labor began in the galleries  
and moved into the corners of the streets  
as the sand became hard and dense from footprints  
and the water blackening and slick with human bondage  
and waste and wear, headbands tied up the hair  
and metal clanking chains remanded and maintain order.

Whose bright idea was it to push some of us down?  
Who gave the orders to cast stones against the tree?

Their eyes were fixed on the blue sky, the lushness of the waters,  
open air and whole vistas of movement in the clouds  
while the narrowness of their oppressors began to skim off  
the humanness, eyes no longer met with respect,  
bodies no longer equitable – who determined the price to be paid?

Whose best thinking put a number on another?

## Rockefeller

*Immigrants are inevitably influenced by New York's particular urban context, yet they do not become homogenized in a so-called melting pot in the city. The old and the new are blended in many ways in response to the circumstances in the city – a kind of New Yorkization process. Nancy Foner, 1999*

Peace time. Stavros P in Brooklyn. I recall before the war –

We bombed Baghdad

And we went into that church basement

I remember Lauren was sitting on the

Washing machine and the rest of us were seated around

the table which was painted white

but it had so many coats of paint

that people had carved their

names in it or

chipped away revealing red

On one layer and then a greenish grapy

and some of the wood shone through

(carvings of names)

they are all dead now

Wisdom. James. (the one we called Jay)

He became a girl named Tiffany (?) or (Whiskey??)

Angel – the muscle boy from Puerto Rico

and Jules – the muscle body from Irish Bronx.

Something else I wanted to float

A short story where the protagonist takes the food  
delivery boxes from these new Apps – Blue Apron  
and lives in a variety of places  
old parsonages  
and the back of AA meetings  
and spaces and  
sleeping in the library.

But I'm just a worn-out hag now

Then I think of Ms. Bobby

I always go back to her –

Where did she go?

And Yvonne, was she there?

And then Doc showed up

Cesar – I think he had lost his license  
to practice medicine.

Or Jacquie? She owes the Blow Salons.

I don't quite understand any of it.

Robin had on this beautiful hate. It was  
jumping the turnstile  
and everything you said  
was a lie.

“Take an action; take a nap.”

People smoked inside.

I'm over fifty now.

Peaceable times ended a long time ago

An entire generation knows only war

Drag queens

junkies, ex-cons, educational opportunities are key

And a sense of entitlement

**4/9/2017**

**The Cane Threat**

The other night  
with the dog off leash  
a woman with a cane  
nearly attacked me  
or the both of us  
And I flew profanity  
but what scared me  
was that I would have murdered her

I saw the movements  
from peaceable to war  
and at that moment  
40 Tomahawk missiles  
were launched from the homeland.

There's always a divide between the immigrant  
and the citizen  
At any moment,  
one can be pushed to the end of peace.

It's insane. And we are insane.  
"God help us. God help us."

## **Liz's Lament (a song)**

### **Everything you told me was a lie**

Everything you told me was a lie.

Everything we had went goodbye.

The dishes in the pantry weren't dry

But all the words you mentioned were a lie

I was a prisoner in your wooden shack

Nothing that I gave you ever did come back

You took me down for entertainment

and shot it on film for payment.

The flashes of truth that survived

But most of what I want is your demise.

They told me education was the key to citizenship

But I'm sitting here without papers



## Radio Row

transistor radios. I don't think that many people really care about dis

I think the way of the radio will be gone now that there's te.e ve.e

Whaddy gonna do?

*My mother was forever saying this to us, during her cancer, during the emergencies of raising many children – so many emergencies – so many more when she was thinking about her own cancer, and then reminded about her mother's cancer, and then she told me an outrageous story about my grandfather and how he died in a psych hospital on Long Island. And so, maybe I tried to find that hospital at some point – it's at the crossroads on Long Island ... where the Sagtikos meets the Southern State.*

*But what was it before? How did the locals decide to build a psych hospital... and other research questions?*

Television is the way of the future.

Radio Row went the way of many neighborhoods – the towers went up.

(would like to pause here for more research and more reading and more and more)

Who were the radio hacks? Do people still build radios?

## **Earlier this week, we were Jesus.**

We were Jews earlier in the week.  
We started out as Jews  
sitting in the long-labored rooms of our Jewish lesbian friends  
each one is twin  
married and had twins  
and the table is set for Seder  
and we are reviving some notions of Judaism  
that's past in our lifetime  
the words of the Haggadah are prescient  
But my own teenager  
misses the finer points of love and friendship  
And solidarity, she keeps saying, "I'm  
not Jewish."  
But likely we are.

Some historical facts came to light about my father's family  
that they were Venetian Jews  
I have no idea if this is really worth noting here  
I'm angry in any case, it's not Wednesday of Holy Week –  
And I'm really focused on the week as it is – and doubly so – my Orthodox baptism  
and generally, the cultural practice of being Greeks  
But now I am an Episcopalian, and I married a Lutheran Pastor  
and what's worse – I don't eat any of the foods from the Greek tradition  
because I am watching my weight and I don't eat carbs  
and anyway, tomorrow is Maundy Thursday  
So, Wednesday is the pivotal point –  
shall we put on an Easter Dress?

It's a strange experience each time  
to somehow feel I am a Jew  
and suddenly I am Christian  
and then again, I feel the pull of the Orthodox Vigil.

Death and life  
light and dark  
And walking the way of the Cross  
and all of the questions it raises  
for me. And then what does it matter?  
My brother and my parents are gone.

## **Four years**

### **September 11<sup>th</sup>**

I'm tired. I don't feel like being here today.  
Someone put speakers on a riser  
and someone else sets down a vase of flowers.

The undocumented are not mentioned  
Their names were lost in the dust.

The sky will never be the same for me.  
Streams of light filter down from the clouds,  
but all I can see are the shadows.

## **Gotham Unbound**

“When you plan a city around a medieval torture device, you have to be prepared to take some lumps.” Steinberg (11)

One

Hard knocks. That’s what they say about folks that came around  
an education from another way.

Hard knocks.

Pounded on doors.

Steely bumps.

Beekman’s swamp. aka Cripple Bush old Wreck Brook. Two wetlands

Two

Hard to imagine swamp in Manhattan, but there was  
on the edges, all the grasses piled atop the sandy loam  
and the swish – schism lapping sounds  
of water on grass and birds sift through it for small eels  
and other crabs and such.

If you do have time to go to Brooklyn, there are some two  
spaces where you can imagine lower Manhattan  
with the same landscape. But it is hard to imagine swamp.

1760s Slaughterhouses on the East side of the Collect sent hides to tanneries for  
processing with the detritus dumped into the pond or flushed into the Old Wreck Brook  
before debouching off the East River.

an epidemic of Yellow fever in 1795 took the lives of more than 700 people. The  
pressure to rid the marshes of water intensified. (MCC 1675-1776 5:118, 118, 121  
(1744).

Three

I suppose it makes sense to want to rid the marshes of water

because water breaks everything down  
and moves items, paper, rocks, shells, fleas and even feathers  
off the soil and out to the sea, and it mitigates a type of fluid will  
from the creator itself. And the Eastside of the pond would have been the dump  
and the flushes of water moving through the village would have been trouble  
some fever racing through and capturing 700 lives would have public opinion  
against any form of fluidity. People want certainty.  
They want to grab the branch of a tree and know that it is steady.  
They want to stand on a staircase and not wonder if it will collapse.

Those reedy marshes  
had too much still water, and the folks were looking for dry land  
and concrete plans and rocks and brick and mortar.

As late as the American Revolution, Manhattan still contained an impressive array of water resources. According to one calculation, these included twenty-one ponds with the Collect being the most substantial, plus approximately sixty-seven miles of streams. The Saw Kill totally over eight miles in length, drained what eventually became Central Park. A stream called Minetta Water coursed nearly three miles through the future Greenwich Village. The Great Fresh Kill twisted through Times Square long before balls dropped on New Year's Eve. (Steinberg, 48.)

Four

Ever walk-through Greenwich Village to imagine a pine barren with a stream  
so wide that it coursed for three miles?

Me neither.

But let's imagine it now.

Minetta Water coursed, perhaps it was thirty feet across –  
let's imagine that we are in the middle of it –  
walking chest deep from 15<sup>th</sup> street  
begging to be taken a little further downtown.

Imagine the open sky and the green pines  
and the sandy shore and the abundance of wild life.  
Can you see it?

But, in 1798, with New York in the middle of another attack of yellow fever that would claim more than 2,000 lives and the already embattled Collect described as “a shocking hole,” a Westchester County physician stepped forward to suggest that the city tap a source from off the island (Steinberg, 48).

Five

Leave it to a Westchester doctor  
to decide there’s no reason for lower Manhattan to have its own clean water.  
I was on the train with those Metro North commuters  
just a few days ago, and I had to tell the lady there were no reserved seats.  
And I must have sounded so rude.

But what’s ruder?

Is it ruder to sit and pass judgement?

Or is it ruder to call someone out?

The trains lank along the river,  
most of the wetlands are gone.  
There’s no source of drinking water until  
we get somewhere North of Yonkers.  
Is that right?  
Yonkers or even more North?

What a thing to say about the lower Manhattan,  
a shocking hole? And whose fault was that?

And why did nobody think to keep the rivers, streams and ponds clean?

What was the progress at that time?

I have so many questions and so much anger

for all of it, the ways that the superior classes have ruined the city.

And it keeps happening. There are new communities all along the Hudson  
popping up, a small strip of stores, a Starbucks, a Pizza shop and a movie theatre.

And that is what makes a village now.



## **Pseudocopulation**

*pollination strategy of some orchids in which floral parts mimic a female insect tricking the male insect into attempting to mate with the flower.*

*Solanum tuberosum*

*The potato, together with wheat, rice and maize, is one of the world's most important foods. And it is a matter of amazement that this food comes from a poisonous plant. (Frohne et al. 221)*

Maybe it was a dream. Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich and June Jordan  
walking across the snow-covered path  
at Stony Brook's English building, maybe sometime in early 1987,  
and the conversation was about food,

they were all discussing the carbohydrates  
of rice and wheat, and then the humble potato  
and underneath the concrete so many tubers  
and so many bones, an x-ray might reveal

the poisons, the water tables,  
what's underneath that gave them all cancer?

**A Colour Atlas of Poisonous Plants: A Handbook for Pharmacists, Doctors,  
Toxicologists and Biologists**

Plants have descendants

I never thought of this before.

## **Queen Street had clean water**

Queen Street was also called “tea-water pump.” 1794

“A new dialogue with land was set to begin.” (Steinberg 50)

Water Lot grants – buying land under the water.

Greenwich Village was a Pine Barrens.

**Gouverneur Morris**

wrote the line, “We the people of the United States.” in the U.S. Constitution

Simeon DeWitt hired as a geographer by George Washington

John Rutherford –

they were given the title. “An Act Relative to Improvements, Touching the Laying Out of the Streets and Roads in the City of New York, and for other purposes. (Steinberg 59)

“Beginning in 1808, Randel set about taking measurements for an epic Blue print of New York, and later spent six years inscribing the template on the land by erecting monuments and sinking iron bolts into rock – more than sixteen hundred markers in all. (Steinberg 60)

the official commission plan for the city was published on March 22, 1811 (Steinberg 61)

But when the grid was thrust upon the land, it represented the opening act of New York’s unique version of urban development and consequently set the stage for the greatest transformation in New York Harbor’s ecological history. (Steinberg 65)

“Battery.” Originally called Capske Hook – (native American for “Rocky Ledge.”)

Gun emplacements that the British installed in 1788 Fort George (Initially Fort Amsterdam) was torn down and thrown into the water.

## **1850 Water Lot Grants**

East River. "Hurl Gate"

Hell's Gate.

## Hunter's Point

Regarding Hunter's Point.

*[James] Thompson speculated that the extensive marshlands would need to be filled in and graded to create a street system for the new city. So, in 1874, he purchased a nearby thirty-acre farm with the intention of harvesting soil from the uneven terrain. Using steam shovels, he excavated, it is estimated, some one million cubic yards of earth and sold it to the city. That was roughly the same amount of fill that was later mined to build the World Trade Center. (Steinberg, 141.)*

Sign posts and signs of a trash heap

near the flow

a mirror, a broken bottle of beer,

an abandoned cart

a box and table top

a lock

six feet away

then a twenty-foot drop

to a pile of bricks

and an empty warehouse

how much have we left behind

why the thought of migration as a solution

the wisest say

be still

be still

and yet what delight there is

in chaos

## **Spartina Patens**

Salt Meadow Hay. (Etymological) grass – (n, hence) whence grassy (adj. – y) whence also e.g. grasshopper and grass widow.

Grass widow?

## Cord Grass

*The crisis of the 1850s is important, however, because for the first time there was a recognition of limits. These nineteenth century men were conscious of the fact that they were changing the natural world and that doing so could have consequences. Growth, was not, for them, open-ended. They had a keen sense of the unpredictable, as the struggle over the changing underwater geography demonstrated. What happened at Buttermilk Channel, after all, could happen elsewhere. This they understood. They did not take control of nature for granted the way that planners down the road would. (Steinberg 108)*

Imagine how devastated when the elite realized there was a limit to the land  
How they must have sought out each other's fortunes and wallets  
and how they might have a street fight if it weren't for the noblesse oblige  
of pushing the geography –

nature has a way of ignoring the rule of order  
it pushes through  
underneath the city  
I saw it on a map  
underneath there is enough water to power  
the entire city



## 1905. Oyster Trust.

*By the First World War, with the city poised to eclipse London as the center of global capitalism, New York's world historical significance rested on two pillars: Finance and Filth. (Steinberg 166)*

### Finance

One came to power at that time,  
through commerce and greed  
the All-American way

### Filth

Two left the city  
for brighter suburban shores  
the Anti-Urban mythology

## Finance and Filth

The problem with the trash was a first colonial century's struggle

the detritus of horse's

the overachieving growth and it remained a problem

for the phytoplankton

"It is not too much to say that the waters surrounding New York had been turned upside down. (Steinberg 171)

Hypoxic.

My – sit here, she says.

Have a seat. Wait with me

a brief moment. Sit.

Grand Central Terminal.

I'm trying to say something –

about the past – something important

and poignant

but all we've really got is lack

and I've got a nameless anxiety.

It's not going too well.

I think too much.

## Central Park

*“If only nominally... is a remnant of Manhattan Island’s natural history, a retreat from Gotham to the country, and, equally, a symbol of the environment: trod upon, abused, limited and in constant need of care.” (Holt xiv.)*

Far and away, the oddest moment of visiting the park came one day when a distant cousin wanted to go there as the sun was going down in mid-February.

He was fascinated by the rock formations. Olmstead couldn’t level the park’s boulders so, he made the ramble.

How many infections took place during the AIDS crisis and later during “the pandemic?”

How many New Yorkers avoided the park?

Who decided to go out and risk it all?

This could be a real study in natural history.

## **The Fulton Ferry**

Between 1814 and 1924

View North. Photograph. Pier 16 and 17 and the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges.  
Fulton Ferry to Brooklyn departed from terminals located here. (Rosen 77)

At one point, I saw a black and white photo of the ferry terminal,  
grey scale,

men in top hats and ruffles, less women than men  
less feminine women, more feminine manly men

the ferry terminal like everything  
became a mall, a place to buy,  
for commerce to commerce  
living in America at the millennium

what's it got in its pocket  
what's in your wallet (Banks)

how much is in the account  
when the Chinese Exclusion Act passed  
who was on the ferry eyeballing some working stiff?

**Georgia O'Keefe**

Valentine to Brooklyn Bridge

What luck. Some locks. Something borrowed from the sky  
a precursor to Santa Fe.

I'm undone. I would like to ask,  
What were your demons?

"Well... if you want something hard enough, you'll get it..."

[Do you think that's true?]

"Well, I wanted it and got it away from the Catholic Church –  
and that's an achievement."

What would I be without a public library?

and beauty – would never have been mine.

I would not have seen anything but broken glass and asphalt  
the backs of factories

If not for the jet planes and  
a job my father had at the back end of a jet  
I'd have seen a forklift,  
worms in the phragmites –  
a local park or maybe a picture of a ghost ranch

"That door is what I bought the house for."

You could find anything, I think.

## Revolutionary Hope

“A Conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde”

*Lorde: “I don’t honey. I’m sorry. I just can’t let that go past. Deep, deep, deep down I know that dream was never mine. And I wept. And I cried and I fought and I stormed, but I just knew it. I was Black. I was female. I was out – out – by any construct wherever the power lay so if I had to claw myself insane, if I lived, I was going to have to do it alone. Nobody was dreaming about me. Nobody was studying me except as something to wipe out.” – Essence, Dec. 1984*

Wiped out.

At some point, in some place, there is a woman

who stands

who prays

who asks.

Wrung through.

On a different corner, there is a girl

who stands

who prays

who answers.

## **African burial ground 1991 Discovered 290 Broadway**

*Lenape Farms. GSA wanted to unearth the remains. In resistance, the people want to retain them for cultural study.*

The study would be huge, possibly bigger than the unearthing of dinosaur bones if only there was political will to study the culture of the African Slaves.

*People are worked to death, in a sense, because they are disposable.  
1739. Uprising by Jamaican blacks.  
1741. 31 Africans and 4 Whites were hanged.  
source: African Burial Ground National Park, NYC.*

*unlicensed taverns or “dram shops”*

I try to imagine it.

280 Years later – we should have a little party in a shop somewhere in lower Manhattan try to locate the spot where the uprising took place. How brave.

*Cuffee – burned alive in May 30, 1741.*

Here was a real leader of the people, burned for uprising.

I try to imagine a statue in his honor.

## **Epilithic**

*Growing attached to rock.*

Winter spores. Rivulets of green along the rock,  
and everything converges, the wet, the snow, the grey and the green.

*Fenestrate – having small window like areas*

Look through, the cells breathe  
the diamond image,  
amazing these specimens can grow  
on the side of the Trump building.

*Helicoid lyme – sympodial inflorescence with flowers borne on one side of the axis and forming a spiral; can be difficult to distinguish from scorpiod lyme (which resembles a scorpion's tale.) (Pell)*

Walk into the park's pathless ground,  
step over the ridges,  
she breathes  
and exhales a cloud of mist.



## Sober

*“The sobering reality is that even with all the waste water management, the harbor has been irrevocably changed. Overfertilization became a way of life.” (Steinberg, 2015)*

*“Will those in charge of the real estate capital of the world, forever bent on increasing the value of land at all costs, find a way to adapt to the high water ahead? Or will those who profess to love New York, as the booster saying goes, love it to death?”*

She says she takes the herb three times a day  
for heart pain, love pain  
because he didn't say anything back  
when she asked, “Do you still have feelings for me?”

Can't move past the prayers of eleven years  
to believe in something that is a God  
to pray to change one's actions

She is still feeling like she can't horde love  
she can't crack this  
of all things to pursue in desperate constancy

to harass and overwhelm  
to ask for reassurances  
to block the love  
to have the love  
to protest the love

## The End

For about twenty years, I skipped along  
without a fear of death –  
I was in that plausible denial –  
as most have to be  
not considering the shifts in our political sphere  
eliciting fear  
of short conversations with middle-aged Scotsman  
on a street, fetching his dog  
and then, I'd think, "What if this is the last moment?  
And vaporization.  
What if my shadow  
and my shoes were embedded into those bricks?  
What if, Nagasaki or Hiroshima, and I wonder  
what we want in mortal combat.

It's a clearing out, moving through all of these ideas  
and day to day – how to decide structure or restaurants.  
"Look at me. Look at me. Look at me." Laurie Anderson

But we are past that now, objectifying stance, less dressed  
and more with sound like everybody else.

The research shows we feel more alive than ever. But we can't stop.  
Remember that Wim Wenders film, where they were watching their own dreams  
and practically died because they forgot to eat a candy bar even.

I've done it for fear of missing one post

or show stopping expression of self  
and it's all "Look."

"Look."

"Look."

Parallel play. But don't see anyone.

To prove my point.

There's ten people:

a guy shouting. a middle-aged matriarch, a monobrow bald guy,

a bearded guy, a woman with dyed black hair,

chubby brownish guys, hushed bad young couples.

In 1910, "in other words, New York was being forced to cannibalize itself." (Steinberg 239.)

## How Can One Write A Whole Book About Migration And Not Include Recipes?

The sister disagrees with sister  
one makes a pie by buttering every layer  
the other sister cuts the pie  
and pours the butter over the top

Premigration family and religious patterns  
also have an impact (Foner.)

it is an aesthetic  
and memory  
and real



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