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Five Bodies

Live transcript

KEYWORDS

breath, ritual, poem, body, recordings, thought, sound, walking, words, piece, thinking, poetry, called, feel, day, text, book, move

SPEAKERS

CA Conrad, Will Montgomery, Canan Batur

01:00 Canan Batur

Hi everyone, welcome. My name is Canan Batur and I'm the curator of live programmes here at Nottingham Contemporary. And tonight, it's my pleasure to welcome you all to Sounding Ritual: (Soma)tics and Acoustics with CA Conrad and Will Montgomery. This is the third event of our second series of Five Bodies live readings, an online programme of poetry, writing and text. All of this season's Five Bodies events are organised under a theme of entanglements and they investigate poetic ecologies in the Anthropocene, opening up new conversations around coexistence, resilience and sustainability. For those of you tuning in for the first time, Nottingham Contemporary is a contemporary art centre based in the East Midlands. We work with artists, academics and communities to reflect on contemporary art, society and visual cultures. Our public programmes reflect on transdisciplinary, sensorial and speculative practices of radical sense making and wayfinding via questions of repair, pedagogy, remediation and mutation. Five Bodies was imagined in conjunction with our colleagues Sarah Jackson and Dr. Linda Kemp, from the critical poetics research group at Nottingham Trent University. I also want to thank my colleagues, Olivia Aherne, for their support in putting together this year long poetry series. And also Jim Brouwer and Shannon Charlesworth who are supporting us today behind the scenes. And of course, a word of thank you to Nottingham

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Trent University and University of Nottingham for graciously and generously supporting this event and acknowledge their ever unfolding support. Tonight's event includes AI driven live captioning, which can be accessed via link in the YouTube chat, and this will open in a separate window on your browser. And within that you can adjust the scale and the layout to suit your requirements. And now to our speakers this evening, I'm delighted to introduce Will Montgomery and CA Conrad. Will Montgomery is a reader in contemporary poetry and poetics at Royal Holloway, University of London. His publications include *The Poetry of Susan Howe*, published by Palgrave in 2010, two co-edited essay collections, *Frank O'Hara Now*, co edited with Robert Hampson published by Liverpool University Press in 2010. And *Writing the Field Recording: Sound, Word Environment*, co edited with Stephen Benson and published by University of Edinburgh University Press in 2018. And the recent monograph *Short Form American Poetry: The Modernist Tradition*, published by Edinburgh University Press in 2020. Will has released several CDs of field recordings, sound art and music and has collaborated with the poet Carol Watts and the artist and writer Emmanuelle Waeckerlé. I'm also very delighted to welcome CA, who has been working with the ancient technologies of poetry and rituals since 1975. Their new book is *AMANDA PARADISE: Resurrect Extinct Vibration* published by Wave Books in 2021. They received a Creative Capital grant, a Pew fellowship, a Lambda Literary Award and a Believer Magazine Book Award. Their play *The Obituary Show* was made into a film in 2022 by Augusto Cascales. They teach at Columbia University in New York City and Sandberg Art Institute in Amsterdam. In terms of running order of tonight's event, Will and CA are going to read and present for around 25 minutes each. They will then be in conversation together. Following that I'll be joining them both to field any questions you might have. So please do send through any thoughts or questions via the YouTube chat and I'll keep an eye on that throughout the evening and now I'll hand it over to Will for his presentation. Thank you.

05:19 Will Montgomery

Yeah, okay, can you hear me? Yeah. Okay. Sorry about that. I haven't done a YouTube before. So, yeah, I can't see anybody. It's quite a weird way of doing things. So thanks Canan and thanks to Olivia Aherne also, thanks to the staff at Nottingham Contemporary and also to CA, we've

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had some nice exchanges in the last few weeks as we were kind of getting ready to do this. I'm going to try and share my PowerPoint now because that's how I want to do this. I hope it works. Okay, is that okay? Yeah. Oh, good. Okay. Let's give me a second. Okay, so I decided to approach this project through the prism of a project I'm involved in at the moment, I'm collaborating with the writer and artist, Emmanuelle Waeckerlé and various other partners on something called *Walking in Air*. Okay, and this is a way about thinking about thought in a dynamic and mobile way. And it's also it's about the way that thought is modulated by the environments which we move through. And I think, you know, kind of the way the project works will become, the best thing I can do is to actually do it, rather than to try and explain in detail how we go. So I'll just go straight into it. I hope that what follows will open up some new angles in the way we read CA's poetry. Okay. So what I did in preparation for this event was a circular walk. This took in Cissbury Ring, which is a hill in the South Downs. It's on the South Downs Way, which run, it's a chain of downs, which runs along the south coast, very near the sea. And it's topped with the earthworks remains of an Iron Age Hill fort. So setting off, I walk via a declivity called stump bottom. This is also a crossroads. With me, I have my audio recording gear, two apples, some sweets, and four sheets of paper. And these carry brief texts from taken from works by CA, by Emily Dickinson, the anthropologist Tim Ingold, and the musician and sound theorist François Bonnet. And I start by reading and thinking about a poem. I'm just going to read this poem by CA that's from from the new book. I find some in the moths flight. There is a little in the moon, more than a little in my man, a flower recently gave me enough room to accommodate my old friends, chaos and death. 18 day conversation through a magnifying glass, a tulip to challenge any artist, an edifying, short lived fellowship, symmetry, harmony, rethink, recode, engine, flow. So I think about this poem as I start my walk. I think the some and I find some in the moth's flight has to do with a future poetry. That's a phrase from the previous poem in the book. Both of the CA poems I take on my walk are part of the Corona transmutation sequence in their recent book, *AMANDA PARADISE*. I should say here that the book asserts that the author is in fact, Amanda Paradise, and the title is by CA Conrad. I like the shadowy eroticism of moth, moon, man and flower. I like the erratic movement of the moth, perhaps a figure for the movement of poetry. The latter part of the poem

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talks about community, fellowship, but also change, recoding. I think a lot of CA's work has to do with the recoding made possible by what they call ritual. And these rituals seem designed to carve out a space of creative resistance. So here's a phrase from an extract from an essay by CA, which I'm just going to read. So somatic poetry rituals can help us see the creative viability of everything around us. The focus the rituals provide can reshape not only our poems, but reveal the hidden edges of the world we thought we knew. Start with the refrigerator. Ask yourself how to enter into the ritual with this box that stores your body before it becomes your body. Hold an empty drinking glass against the side to study its purring motor. Use a magnifying glass to examine the exterior and interior in ways you've never done before. Then use binoculars for sitting across the room and looking at it very carefully while far away. Please close your eyes, smell the inside and feel the contents. Write notes before, during and after, write for five minutes, or longer. Okay. I'm fundamentally I'm an irreligious person. I don't have much time for rituals normally, or for the soul or the spirit, or even I'm sorry CA, or even crystals. But I've been long been interested in text scores. I like the way CA's rituals are bracketed from the every day, the text score is a prelude though to action. And CA's ritual is a prelude to writing. These are simple but generative acts of recoding. Text score and ritual both have the characteristic of portability, they can be adopted and used in very different situation, and to very different ends, so I think there's something very generous and generative about this way of these rituals that CA creates, and CA's depiction of food as your body before it becomes your body is analogous to the way I think of breath in this presentation. There's going to be quite a lot about breath in what follows. But first green, in the South Downs at this time of year, the colour green is intensely present. In fact, there are many greens that reveal themselves as the light plays across the curves of the landscape. It's a very soft, curvy kind of landscape this part of the world. But red is on my mind too, because CA's poetry moth led me to a moth in an Emily Dickinson poem. And when I told them I was planning on taking some Dickinson on my walk, CA sent me an essay that begins, In 1975, Emily Dickinson opened the door of poetry for me, which has been my centre of gravity ever since. And Dickinson's very important for me, I did make the first, my first book was on Susan Howe and I kind of partly came to her work through her reflections on Emily Dickinson. But this Dickinson

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poem I'm going to read I think is really extraordinary. A moth the hue of this Haunts candles in Brazil - nature's experience would make our reddest second pale - nature is fond, I sometimes think, of trinkets, as a girl. So what is the "this" of the first line, it's almost like Dickinson is holding something up. You know, it feels like listen, it's sort of self explanatory, but it's not, we don't know what it is. What could Brazil mean here? What could Brazil mean to somebody in Amherst in the middle of the 19th century? Is "our reddest" the reddest American moth? Does our "reddest second pale", that strange phrase, does it refer to the blush of desire experienced in a moment, a second, as we draw towards the candle? Perhaps nature has a love of small bright things. That's what the poem suggests. But isn't this capricious version of nature, different from the divinity of Dickinson's contemporaries, so the poem could be a sly takedown of Emerson, who wrote a famous essay entitled, Nature and Experience. I think about red and greens, reds and greens as I walked down towards the crossing pathways in the hollow of stump bottom. A blue tractor moves across a large field 500 yards away. Pheasants with red breasts and red eye markings make their skrunky sounds. What is meant by nature's experience? So the slope leading down to stump bottom is steep, I hear a sound and turn to see a cyclist coming over the horizon behind me. "Walker", he warns the friend following him. They mean me. So here are two of the five paths that meet at stump bottom. Close by is a patch of land known as No Man's Land. There's no right of way across it, it's private property. So no one can check out no man's land, which is someone's land. I set up my mics and I press record and then I lie down with my feet at the base of the V you can see in the picture. Okay, there's a this is actually video it's just a little bit of a phone video. I lie and look up at the faraway clouds. CA's poetry moth leads me to the movement of birds and flies against the clouds high above, I'm struck by something Dickinson does a lot, the transition from the very small and immediate to the very big. It's an effect of scale. Can such shifts of thinking in poems help us span the huge temporal and spatial reach of the changes that are occurring to our planet? Okay, here's a short, I then read the following text by this guy, François J Bonnet. He runs INA GRM, the sort of French home of electro acoustic music and he's been kind of revamping and revitalising it in recent years. The diminishing influence of the score in favour of recording techniques has re established the need for exchange. Can't see that bit because of

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that's obscured. Never mind. Confirming the irreplaceable role played by oral transmission in music, or in any case music that still responds to the classical paradigm of composition and performance. The term orality in fact may cause confusion here because it is really in the gaps in between words, i.e. in a nonverbal co presence that the musical unsayable can be transmitted, when words no longer suffice, it is the body, the gaze and proximity that becomes expressive. This is where the truth of morality lies, not in the words exchanged, but in the companionship of an absence of words. And a lot when I think and say about that, I mean, one thing that comes to mind as I speak is the beautiful shapes that CA makes with their poems, and there's a kind of openness to the non presence of words, as well as the presence of words and you know, that they, quite often they're, I don't know if you can see that but they're quite small, small on the page. So that nonverbal co presence is something I want to think about. Now, Bonnet is not talking about poetry, but I'm interested in the sounding that shadows poetic language - what Bonnet has to say about nonverbal co presence and companionship puts me in mind of CA's fellowship. And what Bonnet says about the gaps in between words sends me as I lie beneath the clouds and flies to a recent text by Tim Ingold that I'd found a couple of days before my walk. Tim Ingold's very influential on me for the Walking in Air project generally, in this particular text I found is thinks about breath. So okay, Ingold says no human as Peter Sloterdijk has observed exists at the centre of their own circle, they are always with another, as one pole in a bipolar ellipse. The one who breathes is also breathed upon, the two bonded by an intimate complicity are ontological twins. Or in short, in the sharing of breath lies the very essence of human conviviality. Okay, and as we were having a chat before, before we got going, we were lamenting the, the sharing that possibility of sharing that being in a room with people, how little we do that in relative terms, you know, compared to before the pandemic, and so, Ingold is thinking about that in the context of the sharing of breath - breath as the medium in which human collectivities subsist. But how strange to think this thought in the midst of a pandemic, in which an airborne virus has led to the shutdown of most forms of human interaction. I look at another poem by CA. We are second plague sisters with daily breath rituals, bridge of breath for a world of failing lungs. Remember the ones we want to see again, remember them in the deepest breath, web and light

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positioned just right, spider walks across the rising sun. Okay. Now Bonnet's companionship of an absence of words and Ingold's finding of conviviality in the sharing of breath, turned me to CA's bridge of breath in the poem above, in the poem breath joins human groups, but this joining makes coming together under pandemic conditions dangerous. The poem reminds us of AIDS, the first plague of CA's generation, and it links breath to memory, breathing life into the memory of the dead. The sight line that goes through and beyond the spider and its web to the sun reminds me again of Dickinson's shifts in scale. I get up, I stop recording, I move on walking south towards Cissbury Ring. In the fields, there are many methane pumps. In a quiet spot, I attach my contact mics to a fence, put on my headphones, and listen as the wires of the fence are played by the breeze. I hope this will play now. Could you hear that? Yeah, great. Okay. A few minutes later, I continued on this path and then at another crossing of paths I find this small bench. I don't know what it's doing. It's actually chained to the fence in case somebody, some passing walker steals it. I don't know how you would get it back to the road, we're quite long way from the roads here. But anyway, and I set up my regular microphones. And one of the positives of the pandemic was the suspension of aeroplane flights, that wonderful calmness, the quietness, but now we're back where we were you can't listen to the world for more than 45 seconds or so, where I live anyway, in daylight hours without hearing a plane moving somewhere in the air above. Thinking of the spider walking across the sun, I decide, surrounded by small birds, to serenade the big bird in the sky, I remember that I can make music with blades of grass and my breath. Okay, my cries are not answered. Some Ramblers passed by me, eyes to the ground. I move on walking, breathing, thinking about air, thinking about breath. Now in the article I quoted from earlier, Ingold meditates on our preoccupation with embodiment, he's interested in the way that breath enters the body, but is not of it. Okay, and this is what, this is the point of which, you know, the food in the refrigerator that becomes part of our body that I think that connection is. Perhaps we should be grateful that breath, a word whose very pronunciation invokes the sound and gesture of exhalation, has not gone the way of the body, that it retains a kind of poetic resonance that the body in its solidification as an object of the self's regard has lost. With breath, the muscular movement of breathing in the heave of the lungs merges with thinking, with the voice, with speech and song. All are

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together on the same plane of being in the torments and the ecstasies of the soul. So Ingold playfully brings in this concept of the soul in order to find a vocabulary for the material/immaterial confux, that is breath, or rather breathing. Breathing is one with thinking, thinking is not steered by what Ingold calls a cognitive machine that sits atop the apparatus of speech - thinking is coextensive with the life sustaining process of respiration. For Ingold, the mastery of verbal flow that we admire in our culture, okay, that fluency that we all think is tremendous, the ability to speak in paragraphs, this is a negation of a really valuable hesitancy, the hesitancy of the in breath. And that hesitancy, that pause with the in breath is pregnant with thought. Ingold doesn't mention poetry, but for me, this thought full pause emerges in the poetic utterance. I talk a lot about that in my most recent book, which is about short form poetry, it's about the short line, the effect of the short line. Okay, so I move on, I climb Cissbury Ring, where the Iron Age earthworks remain visible. I haven't got a great picture of that, my phone was about to die, but you can see it sort of curving round, those are sort of shaped and have been there for a very long time. I'm still astonished, even though this is basic, general knowledge, when I remind myself that the chalk of the South Downs is composed of zillions of microscopic plankton compressed together somewhere between 60 and 100 million years ago, I'm walking in air, and I'm walking on seafood. I lie down and realise that climbing this small hill has left me out of breath. Okay, so I'm mildly asthmatic, but I'd had COVID about two weeks before this walk. And I was it seemed to have exacerbated my asthma symptoms, I hadn't got my inhaler with me. So I'm far shorter of breath than I'd normally expect at this point and I just lay down after having a look, you can see behind that strange bendy tree which had been shaped by the wind, you can see the sea in the background there. And I come back to this poem, the second plague sisters, the daily breath rituals, the bridge of breath, I think about this bridge of breath, again in in line with the moth poem's, fellowship symmetry, I think about Ingold on conviviality, Bonnet on co-presence, and then I go to Emily Dickinson's lungs. And here's another very strange poem from Dickinson. I breathed enough to take the trick - and now, removed from air, I simulate the breath, so well that one to be quite sure, The lungs are stirless, must descend among the cunning cells and touch the pantomime himself. How numb the bellows feels. So this is a poem, I think it's a poem of zombification, the possibly posthumous speaker is

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removed from air, but simulating life, I simulate the breath. The lungs are like bellows moving in a pantomime of life, a machinic engine, a machinic pantomime of life, and the speaker is both dead and alive, a facsimile of life, perhaps a machine. She incorporates the inspecting visit of himself. This himself is it must be miniaturised in order to, is invited to descend among the cunning cells of her lungs. The poem inhabits the paradox of a breath removed from air. Having got at least some of my breath back, I start off down the hill. I'm not sure if you can see my cursor there, but that's where I am at this point. That's the walk on an OS map, but the bottom bit anyway of the loop that's Cissbury Ring, and then I moved towards this bit that's marked as the Monarch's, as Monarch's Way. Now Monarch's way is a conjectural bit of heritage retrospection. It's supposedly the route taken by Charles the second after his defeat by Cromwell at Worcester in 1615. And I guess you're meant to walk about it, walk along it and think about Charles the second but I feel very sceptical about this, this projection of this, you know, the royalty of the monarchy, the tragedy of the defeated King onto the landscape. The path takes me back to No Man's Land and stump bottom and I'm really quite short of breath still. Here we are again, and I lie down in exactly the same spot as before. And I'm surprised and delighted and thrilled to find my keys. The keys have fallen out of my pocket when I was laying there looking up at the flies and the birds and it would have been really very inconvenient had I lost all my keys at that point. But there they are, they were there when I when I lay down again, I set up my mics I press record and though breathing doesn't come easily, I eventually read aloud some of the texts I've been thinking about. Okay, so this is a poem each by Dickinson and CA so I read them, I don't read them very well because you know because of the breathing problems I'm having. I find some of the moth's flight. There is a little in the moon, more than a little in my man, a flower recently gave me enough room to accommodate my old friends, chaos and death. 18 day conversation through a magnifying glass. a tulip to challenge any artist, an edifying shortlived, fellowship, symmetry, harmony, rethink, recode, engine, flow. I breathed enough to take the trick and now removed from air I simulate the breath so well that one to be quite sure the lungs are stirless must descend among the cunning cells and touch the pantomime himself. How numb the bellows feels. Okay, after a short while lying there, I get up and walk up the incline out of the hollow to finish the walk. Thinking

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about the end of the poem that I began my walk with, rethink, recode, engine, flow. CA's rituals focus on recoding, this walking in air has brought some thoughts about breath and collectivity together. CA's ritual engine is a powerful machine, Dickinson's bellows help me onwards, my thinking motion through the landscape is a kind of.

29:05 CA Conrad

Thankyou that was amazing. Is it my turn? Oh, hello. That was amazing Will, thank you so much. It's very generous. I'm sharing the screen just give me one second. So I wanted to show a couple of rituals before the newer ritual that I use to sound with. And I'm going to start off with this one. I'm just going to show this because I don't really have images other than the book cover. I did a ritual called between corresponding waves, where I brought back to Philadelphia sand from the Pacific Ocean, and a recording I made of the Pacific Ocean. And then I gathered sand from the Atlantic Ocean, and I made a recording of those waves. And on the first evening, I would put the sand under my pillow, I positioned my bed north, I just wanted all this magnetic pool to come out, to come through my head. And then I put the sand under my pillow. And to my left side, which should be from the east, I would play the Atlantic ocean wave sounds. And then I would wake up and do this again, and I would write. The second night was with the Pacific sand under my pillow, and the recording of the Pacific. But the third night was my favourite, because it was both satchels of sand under the pillow, and both dual recordings coming at me from both sides of the Atlantic and the Pacific. And it was beautiful when they would occasionally sync up, they would just sort of hit your ears at the same time, then they would go out again. That was a very exciting ritual to write with. I did a ritual, well the main ritual in this book, it deals with a depression I had after a boyfriend of mine was murdered. But I did a ritual in here that deals with drone warfare. America has been killing tens of thousands of people over the past 20 years, with the drones, especially in the Middle East. And I did a ritual where I was using, because in the United States, you hear the word drone used all the time now. But when that sound of that word enters you, it affects you in a very calming way. I was wondering why that is. And I turned to the Bhagavad Gita, where there is a passage about the word om O M. It's used for meditation, it's used in yoga. It's used to be chanted. And the idea is, according to the Bhagavad Gita, that this is a

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philosophical sound. That when the word om enters you, it's to centre you and calm you, and reconnect you to a cosmic mother. Well, I believe chanting "drone" did the same thing. I was in Los Angeles, when I did this ritual. I went down to a busy street corner, got people to chant "drone" with me, it was not everybody trusts me, not everybody wanted to do it, most people don't. And then I took the ritual to a park, I downloaded an actual drone mission, where people were being killed and I put a bullseye on my left hand, I'm writing and it's on my receptive side, it's my left side, I drew this bullseye with headphones. And every time you can see the Los Angeles palm trees, this is Echo Park. And every time a drone would shoot a missile, and you could hear it explode, I would scream into my left palm while writing. So I was thinking on both the philosophical om when we're talking about especially in the news, we hear it often and then an actual drone mission and what they're doing. Now, this is my latest book. And there's just one main ritual for this. It's in nine parts, I'm going to specifically talk about the main ingredient - I received a creative capital grant, which afforded me the ability to go to all 50 states and I would lie on the ground, and I would place little speakers, powerful speakers, with field recordings made of recently extinct animals, specifically animals extinct in my lifetime. So I'm in my late 50s now, and according to the World Wildlife Association, in in my lifetime at least, we have lost 70% of the world's wild creatures. I would flood my feet first. We privilege the ears, but you know, we're 70% water and water absorbs sound not like anything else on this planet. I would move the speakers up my body slowly while writing. Then finally at my ears. Another portion of this ritual involved burying these copper water bottles - copper is highly conductive, filled with Amethyst, Carnelian and Rose Quartz. This portion is dedicated to a trans woman named Peppy who was very important to me when I was younger. There were so many friends dying of AIDS and Peppy who was about 20 years older, was sort of a source of strength and hope for all of us and Peppy was a Native American. And I chose the city of Wyoming as one of excuse me, Cheyenne, Wyoming as one of the locations to bury one of these because that's where Peppy had a sister and Peppy had hoped to visit their sister before they died, but they died of AIDS before getting out there. The City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis is a very American word, Mni, the Lakota word for water. And the of course the last half of the water is the Greek word for city, so Minneapolis water city, and Memphis

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is named after the much fabled ancient city of Memphis, Egypt. And it's very strange when you stand on the bank of the Mississippi there in Memphis, because Memphis Egypt is I forget how many miles away from Giza. So Memphis, Egypt sits at the mouth of the Nile taking all the force of that water on. And Memphis, Tennessee is right at the sort of jaw bone of the Mississippi, taking on the water, but somebody has built a massive 40 storey glass pyramid right on the shore of Memphis overlooking Arkansas. The fourth bottle was buried in Omaha, Nebraska. And my birth city of Topeka, Kansas is inside this. And so it took me months to set this up. But then I would when I'm travelling around the United States, I would come to Omaha and I would sit on top of the bottle that was buried underground. And with a compass, I would align myself first with Minneapolis, and then eat a little bit of dirt from the Minneapolis location, I had these little bottles with like Minneapolis dirt, Memphis dirt and Cheyenne dirt, they're very different coloured dirt, very different tasting dirt. And then I would listen to an ambient recording, to tune in and sort of leverage myself against everything that I was about to experience to catapult the language out of me. And once I was tuned in, I would begin writing and then I would turn deasil or clockwise to Memphis, repeat with the listening and the eating of dirt. Then Cheyenne and then I do it two more times. When this was finished, I took un, I bury, unearth these containers and dumped the crystals on Peppy's doorstep in Philadelphia. They didn't, they were gone the next day. There were other parts of that ritual, but I thought I would just move on and read a little of the poetry that comes from this. On all fours, I'm a seat for the wind. Most of my family's international travel is being sent to war. If we judge love, we can kill off anything, dragged by our hair across the days until they make their way and set our dreams where we get to evict them. I want to thank the one who invented knocking on the door, but no one remembers their name to tattoo across my knuckles. I asked an archaeologist about first time she stuck a shovel in the ground, her answer had same restorative powers as the grave diggers. When we die, we can no longer wipe the muck off. Just lie there becoming shit of the world. Eat a chip of your own dried blood, join me in the cannibal sunshine fully persuaded by the world through song. Each morning a blue jay screams at edge of the clear cut forest. I scream with her at the bleeding stumps, scream inside something borrowed like ocean, like skin. I want to see before I die a mink wearing a human scarf, skin from a

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handsome hairy leg. Meow. I know somebody recently pointed out to me that mink do not meow. I don't care. It's a poem. I just wanted to say that this poem recently appeared in an art show in New York City and seasoned a little, it's been printed on six feet of chiffon. Because my poems they all stand at the bottom of the page like they are people or creatures. And it's on chiffon because the poem is about warfare and toxic masculinity. And you know, I can't think of a single item of male clothing made of chiffon. Memories of why I stopped being a man for, Jason Dodge. If you're familiar with Jason Dodge, he's one of my favourite living artists who lived in Berlin for many years, but now lives in Denmark. He's just extraordinary. It's normal if your cock gets hard while you are shooting, my uncle told me on my first deer hunt. Pythagoras knew the music of Jupiter and Mercury long before NASA. But to begin again, no hero itching at the door, that never ending search for weakness and neighbours, siblings, coworkers, rival football teams. After seeing the open body of muscle and blood, we had horrible ideas about what to do with our lives. Imagine how they gathered around the first cannon ever fired, sweaty, excited, rockhard. Before he died, Kalashnikov confessed to suffering unbearable nightmares. Surrender your nouns to my verbs he said he said he said he said, and a game of Russian roulette. I want a pair of glasses that can see the wind. I walk around town each night watching the slightest breeze approach dry leaves like a premonition. After million years of dreaming, the solution is still the same. Hold me to your bruised song until it warms me right. And this is just a few pieces again. Thank you again Will for quoting, reading a couple of poems from the section. Yes, the thing is about COVID It made me think of, I lost you know half of everybody I knew and loved in the 80s and 90s to AIDS so they were on my mind frequently. For years after friends died of AIDS, they still danced with me in my dreams. Did survivors of the bubonic plague dance with their dead? Who will dance with whom in here? Let's keep safe, dance together in person. My grandmother Pearl said, Throw your wallet away the moment you lose your job. There were many excuses for losing jobs where I grew up. She was the only mount or person in my family in the 1980s who asked about my dying lovers and friends. She said to me after a week with three funerals, there was a beginning to this pain. Now you know the middle but the end too must show itself. When you survive this, love will destroy all doubt. She was right about that. M drew his face the day he was

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diagnosed HIV positive and kept drawing as his face changed. They were sublime like monk self portrait with Spanish flu. He called on his deathbed at his parents home to say his father was in the backyard burning the stack of drawings. I wanted to make him stop. Please don't he said, it's his last chance to deny me. How can I deny him that? We had much to leave behind in order to follow the river to the sea. My grandfather said always remember you come from people who wash after work. Migration can change a family. Some died before the end, others born along the way. I know my poems by their shapes and have felt their edges in my dreams. The side of a poem rubbed against my cheek like a bone comb or a lover's toe. I want to conclude by talking a little bit about this ritual that I'm now doing that also involves touch and breath and sound. I spent most of lockdown, COVID lockdown in the city of Seattle which is ruled by crows, there are more crows than any other living being I believe in that city. They are tenacious, they are extremely intelligent. And if you give them love and respect they give you love and respect in turn. This particular crow allowed me to pet their beak after a while. I was feeding them on the ledge. That is the, that's Elliott Bay behind there, this is the Pacific Ocean over here. I had a little plastic henuous container tacked to the ledge, it's a wooden ledge, and I put crackers and peanuts and cherries out for the crows. This crow began to bring me gifts. They brought me these 12 gifts. The first gift was this twig. And you know, to be quite honest, I didn't know whether this was for me or not. In the beginning, I thought it might just maybe that you know, but the crow would shake it and then sit it down and then tap their beak on the glass, pick it up and shake it again and then tap their beak on the glass. I said, it seemed like that was for me. I don't know, am I imagining things? Have I been alone too long up here during COVID that I'm like imaginining? Well, I'll tell you when the second gift came, there is just no doubt about it. Just look at this, it's a tiny piece of plastic. And my question is, when did they find this? And when do they think I know exactly who's gonna like this. And I loved it. It was really quite lovely. The third gift was this little berry 4,5,6 and 7 are similar type of seed pods, I'm still not sure what they are from. Number eight is from a linden tree seed. Now, linden trees are not at all indigenous to the city of Seattle. So Seattle sits right in the middle of the world's only non tropical rainforest. It literally rains every day. I was not used to that much rain. And I didn't see the sun for many, many, many days in a row. But the ninth gift was a

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piece of indigenous pine bark. This forest is filled with millions of pine trees. Number 10 is a piece of dried cat food. And they had a particularly difficult time letting go of that and I kept saying I'm vegan take it, it's alright. 11 was this beautiful little green seed pod that was just glinting off the light outside when they were flying in to give it to me, it was beautiful. Now here's the thing, the 12th gift was a piece of gold foil. And on the night of the first gift, I dreamt that the crow brought me gold. And my very bossy boyfriend was in that dream saying you'd better thank that crow, ex boyfriend Christopher. And I did. It was really lovely. I then went after COVID lockdown I went to Joshua Tree, California, which is in southern California, and the Mojave Desert on a residency and these wonderful men who run this Highlands Joshua Tree residency knew that I wanted to feed the wild animals and be with the wild animals and embody the wild animals. So what they were doing was they gave me lots of food, the coyotes would come and surround the house in the evening. When they were there, I would listen to their sounds. And then I would scratch the back of my ears for the coyotes. These are the quail, just lovely creatures, look at their little hairdo. And when I would hear them come in and I would see them, you could touch a different part of your body while writing. The cuckoo a foot and a half long, this is what they look like when they're flying. They were constantly, this bird was constantly coming to kill and eat the other animals that I was feeding. So I was constantly trying to intervene and rescue them. But the Road Runner actually attacked tried to attack me one day because I helped a chipmunk get away. Now the creature and, well for the Road Runner, I would rub the back of my spine when they would come in and write, and each time I would touch that part of my body like the spine, the ears, the ankles, the language coming out of me for the writing just completely changed. This is the creature I was most excited to work with. This is called the kangaroo rat. They only live in the Mojave Desert, they don't exist anywhere else on the planet. They have evolved these massive hindquarters to leap out of the jaws of rattlesnakes, which are, there are quite a few rattlesnakes down there and they have this very long tail. And I would watch them hop, they have this enormous arch that they hop with, they can shift their tail like a rudder on a ship to direct their where they would land, to change the direction where they land. Another portion of this ritual involves watching the sunrise which was not easy to do in Seattle, of course. Much easier in Joshua Tree because it's not it

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doesn't rain down there. It's the desert. But in Joshua Tree I'm excuse me, in Seattle I basically just look for the clouds to turn colour meaning that the sun was there somewhere. And then sometime during the day, I would watch the sunrise on a public webcam somewhere else on the planet. And Istanbul is one of my favourite webcams. It's just beautiful watching the sunrise. The sun just pours over this beautiful mosque, it's just gorgeous every morning, there's a little seagull, there's always a seagull hanging around down here. This is Tokyo, the Tokyo railyards. And there's an excellent microphone on this one. You can hear people speaking down on the sidewalks down there, but the light comes in and just floods the glass on these buildings in the morning. This is Prague. And this one in Africa. I'm always been trying to watch the sunrise but to see these animals to make all these footprints, so far I have not seen any of the animals, just their footprints. Let me finish by reading a few of these new poems. To desire the world as it is, not as it was, falling feather attaches to new life. For a moment, when the hammer approached, we thought is that thing coming this way? We are the fractal dropped to hear our own harmonics in the muffled underground hum of seeds. Refrigerator, refrigerators preserve our future bodies, spinning inside the routines this living provides. We sense the language travel on our constant breath. Open a friend's refrigerator. Hello future friend. Human beings are a symptom of the Big Bang. Gun stores filled with shoppers. Bombs mark the sky with our pledge. I want to pause a second to say that in the United States of America, where I am from and where I'm at currently, last year 45,000 I'm not making this number up 45,000 US citizens were killed by guns. I want to point out that the Vietnam War was 10 years long. And in that 10 year length 59,000 US soldiers were killed. In one year we killed 45,000 of our own people. And just yesterday, the New York Times just announced this. There's a judge in California who just blocked a law trying to prevent people under the age of 21 from purchasing semi automatic firearms. So now these people under 21 can buy as many as many machine guns and these things that they want. It's just madness. It's like an undeclared Civil War. 45,000 people. Part of this forest tastes like the man I love with an actual number of nails holding the bedroom together. Other days when we died where we fell we became the forest. My car never intended to be a meat grinder. Another face going under the waves. We felt awful after hitting the deer. We made love and slept with one of his antlers between us.

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Everything falls with the tree. Something about the man in the pin holding the butterfly down. Dear reluctant sleeper we are supposed to be used to sleep by now. Each night we question where we are going, why we have to go, a stick in the air to poke a hole in the wind. Our planet is lighter with every astronaut shot into space, jolted alive and the catapult of ritual. Roll the world's barbed wire into one ball. Good morning. Glad we are back. Battle Cry connects bodies at a critical moment. While love reveals the art of pliability before and after never so visceral, sing happy birthday while harvesting organs, sing happy birthday while stitching them into their new body. Learn to accept the unanticipated wonder for your hand when the moon reaches back. Don't worry, darkness always accuses us of falling on purpose. You know how to bulldoze me back up these hills. What does darkness know of light filling your navel in the middle of the afternoon. We have not lost our place in line, shaking off the cold. Let's get this garden planted. Give our fruit away to one another. And this is the last one. Without love, nothing would burden us to our knees. You are not a thing I forget is in my mouth I promise my man, put my tongue to his third eye, lick it open. Tremble with baby crow lifted back into the nest. New miracle interrupts the old one. Long enough, we reach in, grab what's needed. Dear Eileen, after a week of radical honesty, he asked me to lie. I shook my head no, I'm always partly cloudy. He's had plenty of warning. Thank you. Hello again, Will.

56:41 Will Montgomery

Hi, thanks very much. That was that was very, very affecting. I'm quite struck by the combination of thoughts and feelings in your work. There's quite a lot of anger. And there's quite a lot of grief. But there's also quite a lot of humour in there. Do you think that's, do you think that the relationship between those components has changed as your work has developed?

57:14 CA Conrad

Oh, yeah. I mean, I felt like I was developing less anger until recently. I mean, now there are brand new laws in the state of Oklahoma, Ohio, Florida, Texas criminalising gay and lesbian bodies. And of course now, Roe v. Wade's going to be overturned. They're, they're going to turn abortion into a homicide in Louisiana soon. It's just it's an onslaught.

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These are these sort of witch burning Christians that Europe got rid of centuries ago. But yeah, you know, I felt like I was, I felt like I was really coming through something, especially after the ritual I did to cure my depression after my boyfriend's murder, but, yeah, over again.

58:02 Will Montgomery

One thing I wanted to ask about is, you know, as I said, at the start of my thing, I'm quite interested in scores. And sometimes your rituals, the way that you set them up, they feel like scores, and even a couple of the poems that you've just read, they feel like they're instructions that you're sharing something or imparting something, you want people like you to step outside of habit as the enemy of writing of creativity, and you want to break down those structures that keep us on the tramlines. Can you say a little bit about your, you know, how scores are fed into your writing practice?

58:38 CA Conrad

Thank you. Well, let me say this, I years ago, I trained my voice, to basically I found the range of my voice. I didn't have money for voice lessons. So I went to the library. This is many years ago, and read some books about voice training. And for a while, I was dating an opera singer and I went to a poetry reading and I came back afterwards and said, I wasn't able to hit the notes I normally can. He said, of course not because you ate tacos. And the spicy food knocked out this range. And then the lemon locked out the other range. And I said, Well, why didn't you tell me before I ate them? He said, well it's just poetry, who cares? You know, he was that relationship didn't last long. But it gave me an opportunity to truly understand the music that's possible. And I score the poems with my own shorthand. Well, so I know what notes to hit and then I just get used to it. I don't memorise my poems, but I memorise my scores, like where I'm supposed to hit the notes.

59:38 Will Montgomery

I see, I see. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I mean, thinking about the music, the pitching. I'm curious about your use of field recordings and how you incorporate those in your rituals and how you see I mean, my I just said a little bit about you know, I've been thought about field recordings in relation to literature, and co-edited a book on that subject and worked

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with the poet Carol Watts in a way that kind of mixed field recordings and poetry. And I'm really curious about the way that opening that window onto the world, the randomness, the strangeness of the everyday, and the way that listening to a field recording can make us experience the world in a different way, because we're giving a different kind of attention to it. So that's kind of that's some of the things, a couple of things that interest me, I've done stuff like processed field recordings, and, you know, kind of fed them into music. Sometimes I think about how field recordings, apart from music, sometimes they become music and that relationship's always, you know, there's always that pressure, that tension between sound and the sound that we think of or experience as musical anyway. So that's where I'm sort of coming from this, this sort of collection of loose collection of ways of relating to field recording, but I'd be really curious to hear about how it fits in with with your work.

1:01:09 CA Conrad

Well for me, I was trying to imagine, well, here's the thing, when I do these rituals, I'm trusting my body inside this ritual, that I've created, I'm completely just trusting that it's going to work out, they don't always work out. But that doesn't matter. There's a great joy. And I have to tell you, this, I was little concerned about myself, because I don't depression is a terrible thing. It almost destroyed me years ago. So I didn't want to have to be if I was going to become depressed along on the road during this, I was worried. But the absolute opposite was happening, when I would fill my body with these recordings, I would become euphoric. It was such an exciting, I looked forward to it. And it was almost as though my cells are drinking in these animal sounds like conversations with an old friend, you know, and, you know, and these animals don't exist anymore, and we're never going to see them again, they're gone. But we do, we do have these traces on the internet, you know, of their sounds and their video and whatnot, which, you know, it's terrifying in a way, but I wanted to return that invisible back into the air again, a little bit, you know, to have these sounds, I played them as loud as I could I use Bose speakers, they're very powerful little speakers. And I have to say, I also was just doing these and very public spaces, interfering with public space a little bit. And I wanted that to be mixed in with the human sounds, you know, and it felt important to me to do that. But my body was literally drinking in the sounds. And then I would write, I would let it

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affect me through my tissue and my blood.

1:03:09 Will Montgomery

Yeah, okay. So, again, it's the, you know, the somatic ritual, that has a purpose and, you know, it's moving towards a purpose and the purpose the goal is writing and to write in a different way, to put yourself in a different state, an altered state that can allow you to, you know, to produce language in a different way. Yeah, I've started to I've got one of those little Bose speakers, I make feedback with it, I have an audio recorder and you can sort of move them, you know, with the mic on the recorder close to the speaker or not, and it produces feedback in a very unpredictable way. And a friend of mine locally, we go off into the countryside, and we just make very small sounds, we're kind of listening, but also making sounds interacting with each other, and, you know, hearing the environment but adding something back into it. And it's, we did one of these with an audience, but mainly we do it without anybody there, it doesn't seem to need an audience. You know, occasionally some walkers go by and look a bit puzzled, but, you know, it's, it seems to be into itself. Thinking about another thing I wanted to just sort of raise with you is, you know, there's this movement, this mobility, and sometimes, you know, the line in these beautiful shapes that you make, but the line is self sufficient. And sometimes it's looking back and forwards, you know, as part of, you know, that the line break run the sense runs on a cross line and maybe two or three lines. It's quite fluid and the shapes are fluid. And I wondered about that, and about how, I don't know the detail of your movements, but he always seems to be on the move. You seem to be criss crossing the United States like a kind of latter day, you know, kind of non macho Kerouac, you know, just sort of buzzing from one end to the other. So I'd just be interested to hear about your relationship to movement.

1:05:01 CA Conrad

I love that you just said a non macho Kerouac. I love that, that made me, yeah, about well, for over nine years now almost a decade I've been itinerant, I've been I have a, well, I'll just say that I have a boyfriend named Trey. He's a truck driver. And we met in Iowa. And we meet in a different location each time. So we've visited, you know, we've been to all the lower 48 States and Canada and Mexico. And I love travelling

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across the United States, I love absolutely love it. I love the sounds that I hear, I love, you know, the migrating animals and certain places that I go to look at. I'm about to go to Nebraska, while I'm driving to Wyoming and a couple of weeks, and I want to go to where the sand cranes are. Well, why I do it is, this ritual was part of it. But you know, the ritual is finished and the book's published now. But I'm still continuing to do this, to some extent. And, yeah, I feel, you know, I just feel more in touch with the planet and being able to write, like, one of the things I'm going to be doing in two weeks is going to the Flint Hills of Kansas, if you're not familiar with this, this is the last remaining piece of the authentic grasslands. So these grasslands used to stretch from Texas all the way up to Canada. And they're all gone now, except for this one, like maybe 100 mile track, but they're everything else has been wiped out. And there's just corn and wheat planted there. But there's just nothing like it in the world, these grasslands, these protected grasslands. The birds that live there, the little creatures that live there, they don't live anywhere else, because they have very specific diets. And it's just lovely to get to see them and be with them and hear their songs and watch them feed their young, which they'll be doing this time of year.

1:07:08 Will Montgomery

Yeah, it sounds like you found those things very restorative. And you derive some strength from those encounters. Something else I was curious about is there's this kind of big interest in music in your work in your life. And I can't remember the track it is but there's somewhere you talk about playing a track again and again, was it a Coltrane thing, I'm not sure it's maybe a jazz thing, but you play it again and again. And again, one of the rituals was hearing something again and again until you I guess you're bounced into hearing it differently, to encountering the music in a different way. I'd really love to hear about the, you know, the, how you approach music, the role that it plays in your life.

1:07:48 CA Conrad

Well, that was a song by the artist Donald Byrd, B Y R D, trumpet player, and it's called Cristo Redentor. And, the reason I liked this piece is because I like the human voice. But I was going to listen, I listened to this for 108 hours, which is exactly four and a half days, continuously while sleeping. Just I didn't leave my apartment, I just listened to the song

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nonstop. And the what I just, I'm so glad I found this up before it began, if you listen to sounds that are not spoken words, you know, they go to one part of your brain. But the moment you hear of language spoken, it goes to a completely separate part of your brain to begin being decoded. And that's why I chose this song. There's a choir, a gospel choir from beginning to end of the song. And but there are no words, they use their voice, like the sort of like just these ahhs, you know, all throughout the song. And his trumpet doesn't even appear for about a minute and a half. So it's just to be riding the human voice without any language. It's just was beautiful. But it did become oppressive by the third day. And by the fourth day, I was like, why am I doing this? You know, I actually had to unplug the stereo, because I could still hear it. And then I had leave.

1:09:18 Will Montgomery

How did you arrive at the number 108

1:09:21 CA Conrad

Oh, I just love the number 108. It's very important in many religions around the world Buddhism Hinduism. 108 is this equation meaning like one, like each one of us has our own way like this is my interpretation. I like the one being you. And then the zero being the om or this void. You don't understand this, like the life you're walking through. And then you hit eight and eight is this number that is infinity upright. It's this perfect balance as above so below, but as soon as one hits eight it becomes nine and nine travels up the spine and circulates in the crown chakra. Nine is the epiphany. It's like the sort of spiritual lesson, so to speak, and nine cannot be destroyed. Anything you multiply into nine heals back into nine, you know, two times nine is eighteen. One plus eight is nine, you know, etc. Three times, you know, nine is 27. Two plus seven is nine, nine, it's all about nine, sort of like lifting, lifting it up. May I ask you about your walks and walking because I was thinking about, I'm sure you might be familiar with the, the transcendentalist, American writer Henry David Thoreau wrote a piece on walking. Yeah. And I'm wondering how you what you think about that?

1:10:46 Will Montgomery

I absolutely love it. I love the way that it thinks about the wild. It seems to be an essay, it could be called the wild as well, instead of walking.

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And I love the way there's a part in it, if I recall correctly, he says, I want to search for a wild name inside of me, perhaps some William, which suits me very well. So yeah, I like it very much, I wrote about Susan Howe's relationship to that text, is very important to her book Thoreau. And my collaborator, Emmanuelle Waeckerlé, my current collaborator, has written a piece which, just published a book, which is a kind of, it's called Readwalking with Thoreau and it involves a process of deletion. So that's, you know, that's a sustained meditation on that text, which turns it into, well it can be used as a scores, as well. So yeah, I love that piece and Thoreau is important also Thoreau, I teach a course called The Art of Noise, which is about the about sound, sound art, the relationship between sound and literature. And Thoreau comes up again and again, because of the way that Cage took on Thoreau. So his piece empty words, which I absolutely love. So empty words for those who don't know it, it starts out he gradually destroys, pulverises the text, he selects phrases that relate to sound from Thoreau's journals. And then he, the first pass through it means that there are no longer any sentences there. And then he breaks it down so some phrases until the last part of it, they're just these sounds, he reads the whole thing, it's designed for reading, you're supposed to read it through the night and finish at dawn, there's a slideshow that accompanies it, which includes some of Thoreau's doodles, it's a very rich piece and there's a fantastic live recording of Cage doing it in Milan in front of a very angry student audience and they're practically rushing the stage. So you've got somebody who's developed this practice, this procedure and they will stick with it. It's not like a sort of open ended we can do anything, you know, that, you know, the whole point of Cage is that you do follow the rules. So he does doggedly and he pitches everything exactly right. And he continues, and you can hear people trying to knock the microphone over and you know, it's very powerful. So that, you know, that relationship between Thoreau and Cage and the I love the way that Thoreau you know, the putting the microphones on the on the fence, the wire fence that's partly thinking about Thoreau, listening to telegraph poles he loved, he thought of telegraph poles, it's quite actually quite pro technology in a way because he thought about the telegraph poles as like the Aeolian heart in that he put his ear to the pole and and hear it and think that this was just like going back to the you know, the glory days of antiquity that this is a wonderful music that's made by nature. Cage

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picks up on that, there's a piece that he wrote for voice and I think it's a metal instrument I think could be a saw, anyway. So that you know that I come back to Thoreau v Cage and then Cage, Howe's take on Thoreau. And now Emanuelle, the way that she's thinking about it, so yes.

1:14:07 CA Conrad

Well, what is your, what do you have any feelings or thoughts about that essay on walking by Thoreau, where he looks at the origin of the word saunter. Are you familiar with that in the book? You know, it comes from when the pilgrims were going to see this relics of the saints and the children would be like, you know, the saunter, you know, this thing. So he said that a true walk is sauntering because it means that you're treating all the ground beneath you as holy ground.

1:14:36 Will Montgomery

Okay. Okay. I'd forgotten that bit. But it makes a lot of sense. I'm interested in a walk that isn't, that doesn't take place along, that's not directed by a pavement but it's basically I'm trying to think about walking as a way of thinking. So instead of having that the article that kind of one of the things that motivated this project is another piece by Ingold, but it's a way of thinking about knowledge that instead of having the sort of detached thinker and that contemplates the objects, it's a kind of static model, that you have this ambulant model where you're moving through the landscape and your thoughts are modulated by the landscape you move through, and you know that the whole thing becomes very, very dynamic and relational, I guess. So that, yeah, so sauntering would fit very well with that, though, you know, as I said, I've got a problem with religion. So the saintly bit, I'd have to hold it at arm's length.

1:15:37 CA Conrad

What I like about Thoreau is, I believe, when he talks about holy ground, he's really talking about the holy ground of the natural world, you know, it feels like, you know, I mean, I am reading into that he doesn't specifically say that, but

1:15:51 Will Montgomery

yeah, and also, I guess, sorry

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1:15:55 CA Conrad

No, go ahead.

1:15:56 Will Montgomery

No just also, you know, the finding of arrowheads, the reverence for a previous culture that has been effaced by his own ancestors. So there's something, an attention to what might have been holy for this other culture too. Yeah.

1:16:15 CA Conrad

Well, he gets very judgmental in this breakdown, he claims that if you're just going from point A to point B to get somewhere, you're a vagrant. He wants you to really appreciate the walking. And you know, this idea of how walking generates text, or thoughts, ideas. I love that. But I think it can be done in many ways with the body. But what are your thoughts? What are you, what is your thinking or feeling about the generating qualities behind walking?

1:16:54 Will Montgomery

I've been surprised at how different my thoughts have been about particular texts, when I do this thing of doing them in a different context. And just taking a few texts with me and Emanuelle says, what you're doing really is read walking. There are lots of ways of doing it, we've worked with collaborators who don't take texts with them who do something that's about listening, or that or maybe they're thinking about creating a score or an artwork or something. But my way of doing it has involved this thinking about poetic texts, and it has been generative of thought, but also every time I think of thought I want to think about the incomplete, the unfinished thought, the thought that is interrupted, because you see a pheasant rushing across in front of you, or something happens in the landscape, the bicycle shoots past you, that it's constantly interacting with all those things, and sometimes it's just foreshortened. It doesn't reach a conclusion. So I'm curious about gaps and pauses and incompleteness, and the relationship between the moving body through a landscape how that might interface or mirror or interact with the shape of the poem. So you know, those things are, I tried to put in some kind of some kind of relation.

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1:18:17 CA Conrad

I have an idea that annoys many people, when I talk about it. I believe that when we're when we're sitting still and thinking about what we're writing, it's privileging the brain and the mind. But when we're walking, or physically active in a ritual to write, we are understanding that the entire body has memory, the feet, all of ourselves, all of our cells in our body hold memory. Like if you've had a great deal of bodywork like massage, or acupuncture, you start to release trauma from the body, all kinds of things come out. But I believe one of the great wrongs of so called Western culture was separating the mind from the body. I believe the only way the mind can be separated from the body is to be decapitated. That's it. I believe that the reason, I really feel like it's, we're embalming the whole organism to be thinking and just allowing the whole body to think together, you know, I don't know. What are your thoughts on that?

1:19:26 Will Montgomery

My thoughts? Uh, yes. Not yes but, yes and, in the sense that, I suppose what I was trying to get at was, was all of that, but and also, what about breath? What do we do with breath? You know, there is this thing that we think of inspiration we think of as, you know, what could be more personal and more part of ourselves than this inspiring breath? Okay, but it's not ourselves. It comes from outside we share it with others, too. So it's something which is both outside and inside that we take it in. It's the very figure of life, but yet it's other to us, you know, and it's holding those thoughts together that I think can be quite generative. And also that that's integral to thinking. I agree that thinking doesn't happen in this kind of, you know, this sort of abstract cell, which, you know, this kind of sovereign mind is kind of operating independently. It's not, it's fed by breath. If you cut off the breath, it stops working very quickly.

1:20:30 CA Conrad

Marvellous. I think we've just been given a message to all right. Okay. That was very exciting Will, I love talking with you.

1:20:40 Will Montgomery

Likewise. Likewise. Thank you very much. And for the for the exchange that we had. We never got to talk about Elvis. Maybe we can talk about

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that later.

1:20:49 CA Conrad

That'd be lovely.

1:20:54 Will Montgomery

Are we moving into the q&a.

1:20:56 Canan Batur

Yes, exactly we are. Thank you so much Will and CA for these beautiful and compelling readings and reflections. It's been such a pleasure to sit back and listen to you both. I have some questions that I want to ask you, but we have also received some questions from the audience. So I thought I can field those to you first. And a quick reminder to anyone who's watching if you have any last minute thoughts or questions that you want to pose to both CA and Will, please just pop them in the chat. But to start us off, we have a question from Rob Stanton. He's saying I love how this project seemingly ties together all your interests. Will, I was wondering how you see Ingold's thoughts on breath related to its importance in 20th and 21st C American poetics?

1:21:54 Will Montgomery

That's a really good question. The importance of breath in relation to Okay, 20th, you know, I haven't really thought about it in relation, I haven't put it together in that way. I haven't thought about it in relation to Olson or to Ginsberg, any of those big names at all, so that you know, the thought, the the way I've thought about it, thought about it in relation to the role that breath plays in Peter Gizzi's work. And I've thought a bit about it in relation to Simone Weill, other things have come in, but no, I haven't. I haven't really taken it down that pathway. Sorry, Rob. We can talk about that. Maybe?

1:22:40 Canan Batur

Um, so this is a question. Thank you Will, this is a question to you CA, Nele Möller is saying thank you both so much for the presentations. My mind is buzzing. CA just a short question, could you share where you find recordings of the extinct animals?

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1:22:57 CA Conrad

Oh, yes, many different locations. There's a website that has a lot of bird sounds on them. One of the birds that you, there was one bird in the corner it was the dusky seaside Sparrow. That's from the Audubon bird site. But there's also the Cornell institute that has a lot of recordings. But the thing is, entomologists who study insects, ornithologists who study birds, mammalogists, all these different scientists, for decades, have been collecting this data. And I don't believe that any of them ever imagined they were creating a tomb. But that's basically what it is now, because these creatures are gone. And you know, I don't know they're there, they're on the internet. There's videos. I don't know. I mean, there are possibly many creatures who were never recorded who have already gone in the past few years because the number of species of plants, insects and birds that are dying every single day is extraordinary. I don't know.

1:24:09 Canan Batur

And also on that note, just in addition to what you just mentioned, CA, British Library has an amazing resources as well, so you can find their sound library online. So some of those, you know, recordings are available there as well. If you are interested in digging further now, I guess I have one last question. And that will be about this connection that you have made. Will you talk about Ingold, how you talk about Ingold and how they mentioned how breath in the have of the lungs merges thinking with the voice, speech and song and how it becomes ecstasies of the soul. And then also you referred to CA's poem, and I caught daily breath rituals, bridge of breath for a world of failing lungs. And I was wondering in a time when very recently pandemic took our breath away, as systemic abuse chokes people of colour and nauseous environmental policies asphyxiate the planet, an ultimate vital act of sharing is to take in the world and to inhale. Respiration is a psychological process which can also be trained. And we take a deep breath when we want to express something or when we brace ourselves for a difficult task. What does contemporary I mean, maybe this is more like a provocation. But what does contemporary art have to say as freedom of speech is jeopardised, yet over abundant, and dissenting voices are left unheard? How can we learn to detect the whispers arising from archives of voicelessness and ethnic bodies? How can we

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move beyond and think of nonverbal co presence in asphyxiation? Is the question.

1:26:03 Will Montgomery

Okay, the big question, how can we make things better? That's too big, I don't know. It's just too difficult. But what I'm interested, I guess, one of the kind of musical sort of groupings I'm interested in is a sort of loose affiliation of composers known as vandal visor group and, and the guy that is the kind of prime mover in that Antoine Boyer, is he's quite interested in the small, I mean, this whole group reflects a lot on silence, on kind of listening and its place in relationship to silence and a lot of the work produced by these people is very, very quiet, very small. And it comes out of Cage and it comes out of Feldman a bit too. And I think that small gesture can sometimes be very powerful because we live in a time of excess, of absolute deluge of I mean, we've put, you know, this is one of the things that CA was talking about, there's this extremity of the violence, there's these 10s of 1000s of people being shot with we think about the, our experience, as soon as we open that, you know, the sweaty, smelly cavern of social, you know, like Twitter or something, we just get it, it's overkill. So sometimes doing something very local, and very small, I think can be very powerful, it can carve out a small space of resistance. And that's about as much as we can hope for. I went to a concert a few days ago, where we did a, the whole audience was about 40 people there, which is about right for the venue. And we did a Pauline Oliveros piece, a quite well known one, I think it's called learning how to fly, but basically everybody starts breathing together. And then, and you think you'd sort of, you know, you're not breathing at exactly the same time, but everybody in the room is breathing, you're breathing deeply. And then you start to gradually start to vocalise and the, it's quite a powerful experience, you know, because I saw, you know, a big warning sign goes up in my head, hippie, you know, I think, no, but then in it, I found it very powerful. And so what we had was a kind of choir, and this might relate to what CA was talking about, you've got a choir of people with singing at different pitches. So it felt like a tremendously democratic and empowering thing, just in that small space, and it came, it grew louder, and then it died away. That's an example for me of a kind of participatory, local, small scale. What can I call it? Aesthetic event, a musical event. It's something coming together, which knocked

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everybody out of their ordinary ways of relating, it was about a sharing of breath. To me that space was quite precious. But you know, I'm not going to overemphasise that or overstate it. Things are dire. And I don't have any answers.

1:28:54 Canan Batur

I don't know CA if you had any notes that you would like to share?

1:29:01 CA Conrad

Any notes that I'd like to share?

1:29:03 Canan Batur

Any comments, or any?

1:29:08 CA Conrad 1:29:08

Oh, I've just I don't I mean, I've been at the moment I've been thinking about just listening to what Will is saying about oh, you're talking about this question. Do I have anything to add to this? Yeah, I'm sorry. You meant that? Okay. I thought this was specifically for Will. Yeah, I mean, it's a very big, it's a very big question. And there's I think sometimes about, you know, when I'm in Berlin, or Amsterdam, and I see the stepping stones or these little plaques that are about this big, they're brass, I believe, and they're there on the sidewalk in front of different houses and buildings. And each one of those has the name and the occupation of the Jewish person who the Nazis took, and the death camp where they died. And I think there's something about the power of that to see every single day when you're on the streets to be reminded of these atrocities. And the United States. I mean, I can only speak as from the United States. As a citizen of the United States, there needs to be something like that. I want to know how we can translate that. First, not just slavery, but also the genocide of Native Americans. But the way I feel I believe every single, maybe we need to have plaques for every single human being has been shot by guns or especially people of colour, who have been brutalised by police, which there are so many, there just needs to be something for us to physically see. I just feel like it's too easy in this world right now to forget, you know, I feel like the one of the problems we're dealing with right now, is this, the short attention span that's propagated through social media and Hollywood.

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Hollywood, you know, we just saw this this thing at the Oscars, where Will Smith smacked Chris Rock in the face. And no, I'm not saying anybody should be hitting people at the Oscars. But, you know, every Hollywood was clutching their pearls, like, how could he do that? Excuse me, but there has never been a pro violence propaganda machine quite like Hollywood, how many bodies have been blown up and shot in the Hollywood movies? I would like somebody to count them. You know, I don't want to watch all those movies to count them. But there must be many 1000s of people. And it's like, the amount of violence we're constantly sending out there. It's just violence is the answer in the United States. And I feel like that, we need to undo that. And there's so much fear behind it. You know, the fact that 45,000 real live human bodies were snuffed out and destroyed in the United States last year, is extraordinary. And I don't know how to combat that, especially right now, when we have these very powerful Republicans changing the landscape once again, and allowing more guns more, you know, for that Judge yesterday to say, Oh, no people under 20, and, you know, his argument was, well, during the American Revolution against the British, there were many young people who needed to use guns. He went to that, it was just the most bizarre ruling. And I need to, we need to have some kind of way of stopping the violence. And so we can catch a breath. There's just so much fear. You know.

Canan Batur 1:32:47

I think that's a beautiful note to wrap this session up. Thank you so much. I'm very conscious of time. And before we wrap up, I just want to say a huge thank you again, to you both, for so generously sharing your work, but also for joining the conversation and engaging with our audiences. It's been such a pleasure. And I'd also like to thank Olivia, Sarah and Linda, for their collaboration, developing the event. And also to my colleagues, Jim and Shannon for their support this evening. A word of thank you as well to Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham for supporting our events. I hope to see you all soon. A huge thanks again, CA and Will. Thank you.

CA Conrad 1:33:34

Thank you so much. Thank you Will, thank you, Canan. Thank you, Shannon, everybody.

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Colophon

Curators: Olivia Aherne, Sarah Jackson and Dr. Linda Kemp

Assisted by: Canan Batur, Helen Hamilton and Shannon Charlesworth

Technicians: Jim Brouwer and Catherine Masters