

Thu 10 Dec
6.30-8.30pm

Five Bodies

Live transcript

KEYWORDS

black, poetics, body, eading, poet, listening, lysis

SPEAKERS

Sandeep Parmar, Olivia Aherne, Linda Kemp, James Goodwin, Donika Kelly

00:03

Olivia Aherne: Hello everyone, welcome. My name is Olivia Aherne and I'm the assistant curator at Nottingham Contemporary. And tonight it's my pleasure to welcome you to Five Bodies, our online poetry reading series. For those of you tuning in for the first time, Nottingham Contemporary works with artists and academics to reflect on how research and practice intertwine in contemporary art and visual cultures. Our public programme aims to understand how sensing, feeling and knowing might support other world making narratives. So, Five Bodies is our new year long monthly poetry reading series, which looks at how practices of attention, invention, and experimentation might help us develop new sensibilities. Therefore, the series welcomes some unexpected pairings, drifts and multiple voices to reflect on sensorial, social, and political bodies. The series was imagined in conjunction with our colleague Sarah Jackson at Nottingham Trent University, who has led the Critical Poetics research group since 2015, exploring creative critical practice, hybrid methodologies, and experimental thinking. I'd like to take this opportunity to show our gratitude to Donika Kelly, James Goodwin, and Sandeep Parmar for contributing three incredible readings for tonight's session. I'd also like to thank Sofia Lemos for her invaluable work developing the series, and Jack Thacker for his commitment and contributions. A word of thank you to Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham for generously supporting our events, and to my colleagues, Jim Brouwer and Ryan Kearney for their technical support this evening. We

msdnittoI Contemporary

encourage participation so please do post any questions or comments that you may have in the chat on YouTube. We also have AI driven live captioning, which can be found in the YouTube chat, which will open in a separate window on your browser, and within that you can adjust the scale and the layout to suit your requirements. Finally, I'd like to introduce tonight's chair, Dr. Linda Kemp. Linda is a poet and Research Fellow at Nottingham Trent University based in the Department of Social Work, Care and Community. Their research adopts a cross-disciplinary stance focusing on poetry and collaborative creative practices with a specific focus on critical poetics. The research encompasses the creative and critical to include poetry, creative critical writing, collaboration, performance, and scholarly articles. Linda's first book, *Lease Prize Redux* was first published by Materials in 2016, and their more recent publication *Stitch* was published by Contraband Books just a couple of weeks ago. Other Poems can be found in various journals and anthologies including *A Glimpse of*, *DATABLEED*, and *Zarf*. Thank you all for listening. I'll now hand over to Linda and I hope you enjoy tonight's event.

03:07

Linda Kemp: Thank you, Olivia, and welcome to *Five Bodies*, this collaboration between Nottingham Contemporary and the Critical Poetics research group. Continuing on from last month's readings and a workshop yesterday at Nottingham Contemporary, this evening offers critical exploration of relationships between creative and critical thought and practice, challenging perceived disciplinary separations, and hoping to explore experimental approaches to creative reading and writing. Tonight's poets offer alternative ways of thinking, feeling, reading, writing, and knowing about the contemporary world, its histories, and its possible futures. Although we're not in the same room together this evening, we can share this virtual space to think and listen together. It is my pleasure to introduce the poets reading tonight. I'm going to introduce all three poets together now so that we can enjoy their work uninterrupted. Each poet is going to read for around 20-minutes each and do be aware that this evening these are not live readings. The readings will be followed by some live closing thoughts from myself, and the opportunity for responses to the readings for those who stay on and do pop those thoughts and queries and questions into

Nottingham Contemporary

the chat. So I'm delighted to introduce our three poets. First, we have Donika Kelly. Donika is a poet and Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa, where she teaches creative writing. She's the author of a chapbook *Aviary* published by fivehundred places and the full length collections, *The Renunciations*, forthcoming with Graywolf Press, and *Bestiary*, also published with Graywolf Press. Donika is the winner of the Cave Canem Poetry Prize, a Hurston Wright Legacy Award for Poetry and the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. She is a Cave Canem graduate fellow and a member of the collective Poets at the End of the World. Following Donika's reading we'll have James Goodwin. James is a poet and scholar whose pamphlet *Aspects Caught in the Headspace We're In: Composition for Friends*, has very recently been published by Face Press. His debut book *Fleshed Out For All The Corners Of The Slip* is forthcoming with the excellent 87 Press. His creative and critical work has appeared in online and print publications such as *Intercapillary Space*, *DATELEED*, *No Prizes*, *The Berkeley Review*, *Earthbound Press*, and *Poetry Wales*. Further work is forthcoming with *Granta Magazine* and *Hive*. James is currently reading for a PhD in English and Humanities at Birkbeck University of London with a thesis on the black socio poetics of marronage, breath, sacrality, and emanation. James also led the Five Bodies workshop yesterday, drawing on themes of lysis, friendship, and listening. So it's exciting today to see how James's own practice is reflected in his poetics. And finally, the third part tonight is Sandeep Parmar. Sandeep is a poet and scholar born in Nottingham and is currently a Professor of English Literature at the University of Liverpool. Her poetry collection *The Marble Orchard* was published in 2012. *Eidolon* was published in 2017, winning a Ledbury Forte Prize for the best second collection. The chapbook *Myth of the Savage Tribe, Myth of Civilized Nations*, was published in 2014, and is a collaboration between Sandeep and James Byrne. Parmar's own scholarship focuses on British and American modernism, particularly women's autobiographical writing, by lesser known writers such as Mina Loy and Nancy Cunard. Parmar is a BBC New Generation Thinker, and currently Co-Director of Liverpool's Centre for New and International Writing. So without further ado, it is my pleasure to hand over to Donika, James, and Sandeep, thank you.

msdnittoN Contemporary

08:05

Donika Kelly: Hi, my name is Donika Kelly. I am very excited to be joining the Nottingham Contemporary in their presentation of the Five Bodies reading series, I want to say just a quick thanks to Sofia Lemos and Ryan Kearney for helping me figure out how to make this possible. And I'm just gonna, just gonna get into some poems. So, the first poem that I'm gonna read, sorry, I was thinking maybe I would read from a different, from my chat book. But, the first poem that I'm going to read is the first poem in my first book and it is titled outwest. Outwest. Refuse the old means of measurement, rely instead on the thrumming wilderness of self. Listen, you have been lost for some time, taking comfort and being home to any wandering thing. Sheep and brown cows graze your heart pocket. Antelope and bison lap the great lake of your eye and in your ear the black bear Winters. You name your dawn shadow rabbit, you name your desk shadow spur. And the river that cuts you as it runs West, you name it persistence. Look, if you could bear sobriety, you'd be sober. If you could bear being a person, you would no longer be an iron bluff. Do not wander. We are all apportioned a certain measure of stillness. So, the next poem that I would like to read is inspired by Rita Dove's, Fifth Grade Autobiography, which is a really really amazing, wonderful poem. And after I read it, I don't know there, was something in it that made me want to write a little autobiography. And there was, I think this moment in my life felt like a prime one for this response to Rita Dove's work. Fourth Grade Autobiography. We live in Los Angeles, California. We have a front yard and a backyard. My favourite things are cartwheels, salted plums, and playing catch with my dad. I squeeze the grass and dirt between my fingers. Eat my tongue white. He launches every ball into orbit. Every ball drops like an anvil heavy and straight into my hands. I am afraid of riots and falling and the dark. The sunset of flames ringing our block, groceries and Asian-owned storefronts. No one to catch me. Midnight walks from his room to mine. I believe in the devil. I have a sister and a brother and a strong headlock. We have a dog named Spunky Fon and Black. We have an olive tree, a black walnut tree, a fig tree. We lie in the grass and wonder who writes in the sky. I lie in the grass and imagine my name a cloud drifting. Saturday dance parties. Everyone drunk on pink (unclear), screwdrivers and Canadian Club. Dominoes and spades, Al Green and (unclear). Sometimes, Mama dances with the dog. Sometimes my dad dances with me. I'm careful not

Nottingham Contemporary

to touch. He is careful to smile with his whole face. Self Portrait as a Door. Usually when I read this poem, I talk a little bit about how there was a New Year's celebration, New Year's like several - I want to say like maybe eight years ago now. Where, after, like on New Year's Day in Arkansas, which is where my family lives now and where my mom's family is from. We - they found in these fields, like all of these blackbirds that had died and part of the reason that they think the birds died is that they were startled by the fireworks. And so, I don't know there was something about that, that sort of startling. That felt interesting to me, I would say. Also, later, when I lived in a different part of the US in New York State like not New York City, but closer to the Western side of the state. I was reading this poem and a woman came up to me and said those were our blackbirds. And I guess those black birds, normally, like in the Spring and Summer lived in New York and then migrated South for the Winter. And so that also felt interesting to me. So this poem is titled self portrait as a door. All the birds die of blunt force trauma— of barn of wire of YIELD or SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY. You are a sign are a plank are a raft are a felled oak. You are a handle are a turn are a bit of brass lovingly polished. What birds what bugs what soft hand come knocking. What echo what empty what room in need of a picture a mirror a bit of paint on the wall. There is a hooked rug There is a hand hard as you are hard pounding the door. There is the doormat owl eye patched by a boot by a body with a tree for a hand. What roosts what burrows what scrambles at the pound. There is a you on the other side, cold and white as the room, in need of a window or an eye. There is your hand on the door which is now the door pretending to be a thing that opens. And the last poem that I'll read from this is titled Archaeology. So, Archaeology. More and more, I find the image of my father in my own face, an emptiness behind the eyes. I am unable to move the ore in my blood slurried and slow. The sun bruising the sky in it's slow drag. I'm dragging his face out of my own. I am the sun and the sky and the hot bruise. I squint against my own light, which is my father's light. Which is me. I am an archaeologist sifting the grit of my muddle blood. There is nothing behind my eyes but the stone you left me. With him, you left when he settled into my face a hot bruise. I am dragging the sun in my empty blood. More and more I find the image of ore your muddled eyes, you are unable to move. Archaeologist, you sift my face, which is his, which is stone. So, I want to turn now to some poems from my new collection

msdnittoI Contemporary

called the Renunciations. That comes out in May of 2021. And yeah, so I think I'll just, I'll read a few poems, a few poems from here. Donika questions the Oracle. Who hid my dad in the mountain impoverished or he would remain invisible and rationed not on milk and honey, but on Bologna and saltines until he grew strong enough to kill the father. Which father? Do I mean his daddy exiled for the rest of his diabetic days to a closet and a house with no power, no water, where my dad, his sisters and his brothers, caught for a time by the crack rock and the pipe lighting up in the dark, lived. Surely not his daddy, Oracle? Surely not. How long was he the youngest? How long was he a child? What God swallowed him whole? The God perhaps who split his mother in two, or took his brother with a bullet from another father's gun in the sunlight in the afternoon? Did he really hold his dying brother's hand, Oracle, the brother who wanted only an apology on my dad's behalf? Who held him when his mother died? Who told him of a heaven where dead mothers and brothers go? Oh, the pigeons, what of the pigeons, Oracle? Did he tend them watch them rise from the roof of the house with no power or water but a daddy in a closet, his sisters and brothers, flaring in the rock light. Did he delight in their return? The pigeons I mean. Did he ever delight, Oracle, in anything a child might? Did he look for his name in the sky? Did he ride a bike made from junk parts in the South Central LA sun, fast as a boy might? Surely, he did that, Oracle, surely that? And when he rose, like an improbable stone from the father's gut, whichever father I mean here, whichever father makes sense. The siblings, the pigeons, his daddy in exile, his name in the sky. When he rose with the stone of himself in his hand, covered in bile and mucus, free now of someone more powerful than the child he surely once was. Did he know the terrible thing he would become? My father visits the Oracle before I am born. He expects a vision of his own death. Body opened as his mother's, abrupt and with mercy. He expects the barrel of the gun. He expects exile in the closet. He expects, in short, a truncated life. By now he knows intervention is only postponement. He asks and the Oracle answers. Afterward and forever, he disavows his body as something he can control. A portrait of my father as a winged boar. This poem, there's something I want to say about this. This poem draws on the myth of Medusa, who after she was beheaded her, from her neck emerged Pegasus, which I think most people are familiar with. Some, I think there's also a version of the story where it's like her blood hits the earth,

Nottingham Contemporary

and from that blood in the earth, Pegasus sort of emerges. And I was really surprised to find out that Pegasus had a sibling, and that sibling was either a winged boar or it was a golden Giant Man. And if it was a golden Giant Man, then the myth that follows that strain, he ends up, and I think that the name is Crius or something like that. He becomes the father of Dorion, who had the red cattle, that Heracles eventually slays, right, or steals after killing Dorion. Portrait of My Father as a Winged Boar. When his mother dies, by metal turned slicing blade, from her body springs my father, whose name I refuse to say as he refuses his father, the half-known man who sired him. In the dry LA light, the boy, my father, turns so that he has caught, t one way a winged boar, another a giant, a gold blade of a man. Both high sculled, thick named, a juvenile without a sounder, a boy without a mother. He recognises himself only in the man, carves himself into golden armour, but the running fact of him, the curved tooth, the thick neck and beating wings. Trembles beneath his skin. Whatever sheen the California sun burnishes out of his body, whatever good work has thickening hand compels, whatever woman he touches in the afternoon on the roof, he cannot deny his firstborn, his red fledgling, her many heads and hands, what he makes for her. A junk bike she loves, cattle red in the field, a mirror, I red wreckage of her body. Once, I slapped my sister with the back of my hand. We were so small, but I wanted to know how it felt: my hand raised high across the opposite shoulder, slicing down like a trapeze. Her face caught my hand. I'd slapped her in our yellow room with circus animals on the curtains. I don't remember how it felt. I was a rough child. I said No. I said These are my things. I was speaking, usually, of my socks: white, athletic, thin and already gray on the bottom, never where I left them. I was speaking of my fists raining down on my brother's back. My sister's. Socks. In the fourth grade, in California, I kicked Charles in the testicles. At that school, we played sock ball: hit the red playground ball with the sides of our hands and ran the bases. I kicked Charles with the top of my foot, caught him in the hinge of ankle. I wanted to see what would happen. I didn't believe anything could hurt like it did on TV. Charles folded in half at the crease of his waist. My god, I was a rough child, but I believed Charles, that my foot turned him to paper. Later, I kicked my dad the same way, but he did not crumple. It was Summer in Arkansas. What humidity, these children, full of water. I hit him also with the frying pan. I hit him also with the guitar. We laughed later: Where had the guitar

msdnittoN Contemporary

come from? My dad was a star collapsing. The first thing a dying star does is swell, swallows whatever is near. He tried to take us into his body, which was the house the police entered. This is how I knew he was dying. I'd called the police. What is your name? He tried to put us through the walls of the house the police entered, which was his body. What is your name? Compromised: the integrity of a body contracting. What is your name, sir? He answered: Cronos. He answered: I'm hungry. He answered: A god long dead. He threw up all his children right there on the carpet. After all, we were so small, the children. The thing about a star collapsing is that it knows neither that it is a star nor in collapse. Everything is stardust, everything essential. What is your name? Everything is resisting arrest. Its gravity crushes the children and the cruiser's rear passenger window. The officer didn't know the star's name. White dwarf? Black hole? To see: throw the collapsing star face first into anything. Face first into the back seat. Face first into the pepper spray. Face first onto the precinct lawn. Did you know you could throw a star? Do you understand gravity, its weaknesses? You are in my house. You should already know my name. So the last poem I'll read has a somewhat misleading title. It's titled *The Moon Rose Over the Bay, I Had a Lot of Feelings*. There is neither a moon nor a bay in this poem. And yet, I feel like the title really captures the feeling of the poem. This also comes out of an exercise the poet Gabi Calvocoressi gave, I was in a workshop with her and she gave us this exercise. And the exercise that she gave us was an adaptation of an exercise that Rita Dove often gives, are submitted for an anthology with poetry prompts. So this comes out of like the confluence of those two experiences. The moon rose over the bay. I had a lot of feelings. The home I've been making inside myself started with the raising, a brush clearing. The thorn and nettle, the blackberry bush falling under the bush hog. Then I rested, a cycle fallow said Winter, said the ground is too cold to break pony, said I almost set fire to it all, lit a match watched it ghost in the wind. Came the thaw, came the melting snowpack, the flooded river, new groundwater, the well risen. I stood in the mud field and called it a pasture, stood with a needle in my mouth and called it a song. Everything rushed past my small ears. Were in the leaves, were in the wing and the wood. About time to get a hammer, I thought. About time to get a nail and saw. Thank you.

Nottingham Contemporary

26:37

James Goodwin: Hi, good evening. It's a pleasure to be here and I just wanted to quickly thank those at the Nottingham Contemporary for their support in making this possible, particularly Sofia, Ryan, Jack, Linda, Sarah, and Olivia. I want to begin by reading a section of an essay which I'm trying to finish which touches on certain aspects of last night's Critical Poetics workshop, which many of us took part in. The essay itself touches on ideas of praxis, lysis, experimentality, phase transitions, blackness, corporeality and embodiment. Movement without change means we see the imperceptible thing immediately connected with us. The thing that moves without change undertakes, in us, the reinvention of experimental poetics, given it's ethereal dissipation, and in it's dissipated aeration, lytically (/lyrically) gives off the sound of the uncreated, the uncreated sounding, fleshing out, of that which is and has content without form, that doesn't proceed by individual creative acts of will, but precedes in writing's proliferation of intractable and (so) volatile animateriality. No point of departure is made, only the autoaffection of a pre-enacted, as yet unknown pull or repulsion of something else's departure that we wake in and wake with. It is a moment of departure repeated, which is to say deferred—one time 'by air', another 'by road' to invoke Hannah Black: what's given is the givenness of a mode or medium's prescient nonlocality (the air given a second time in and by road). Quote, 'does every departure repeat an original departure?', Black writes. I want to get out something about how lysis is not an in(ter)vention, a discursive referent, proffering an existing institutional nexus of formally (inter)subjective recitations of doctrinal first/final truths. It's philopoetic movement is one that is felt in the intra-animation of non separable prima materia, in our anaphonomorphological sounding—falling, rising, suspending, tiring, becoming matter in our exhaustion to invoke Simone Weil—fleshed out spiritous (breath) of earthly inhabitation that we don't experiment with alone because we are an effect of it. We are the sound(s) of something unmade. I don't want to conjecture the intimation that, in the experimental zone of nonbeing, nonknowledge, nonsubstance (etc), we epiphenomenally fumigate (purify) the biosociopoetic backdrop, the experimental horizon of the individual practitioner, distantiating blackness from philopoetics' animmaterial permeability (the flesh and breath which is the uncreated matter of and for thought, which is not

msdnittoI Contemporary

ours): but rather, instead, that in philopoetic thought there is nothing that we are not, making us into no one, nobody, nowhere. Black writes: 'when we are no one we are nowhere, but we travel in the hopes of finding a place to stay still or someone to stay still with and as soon as we've found it we move again because it must at least be possible that never moving is the same as always moving, and we believe our nothingness to be constitutive.' The decreative establishment of lyric experimentality in poetics veers us away from the otherworldly utility of praxis. Writing is our passing through, in passing as, sky, shadow, earth, stone, where we don't know who or where we are but we must be something other than ourselves, experimental poetics emits, diffusely, and enfolds us, toward philopoetic plenitude. The Infinite is our means and ends, and not strictly over, or above or under the distribution of life and death. In(ter)ventive practices of living with/in the interminable communality of experimentation de/re/un/constitute the content and mode of in bodily ethereality escaping but itself not being or existing as escaped from blackness, its own etherealness for, as Black says, 'it takes practice to leave right', to undergo it, in lysis. Fanon comes back through Black by way of nothing other than the inexhaustibly minute and cosmic transubstantiation of being black in the world, wherein Fanon's movements don't so much foreground the possibility of extricating himself from praxis, understood in the sense of action directed towards some change out there, because nothing for him, changes. What's revealed (in his active gestures) but concealed (by his black bodily schemata) is an overdeterminant relationality which presupposes his universal and subjective subordination to the Other's (the white's) real phantasmatic morphogenesis of (and in) Fanon's black racialised schema: 'All around the body rains an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to stretch out my right arm and grab a pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. As for the matches, they are in the left drawer, and I shall have to move back a little. And I make all these moves, not out of habit, but by implicit knowledge. A slow construction of myself as a body in a spatial temporal world—such seems to be my schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of myself and the world.' Fanon continues: 'Beneath my body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by "remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature", but by the

Nottingham Contemporary

Other, the white man who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories.' Blackness, here is experimental praxis's, lytic suspension of forms of life given in dialectical-phenomenology's, configurative accounts (and accounting) of the transcendental subject. What blackness evinces instead phase. Phase instead of instead of form, experimentality (in poetics) before, in being ahead of, praxis. Real don't recognize real. Writing it yields to the presence of non-life. The aporetic limits of certain uncertainty constantly crossed in lysis' animaterialisation of black bodily movement without change. No concession is made possible (or warranted) to prior spatiotemporally corpuscular relations to transcendental modes of representation in [experimental] praxis: only to the flesh and breath out-from-within the black body's own singular moment(s) of emergence from and submergence into the uncreated (decreated) prima materia, which is the medium of and for philopoetic thought. Lysis will have been the condition of it's impossible enactment: 'The body that questions', Moten writes, 'because it is a body that is in question, is an experiment.' This poem is called Side With the Immanent Vex. impatience in plain that we let the damned and wretched wave new circuitry. think oxygenated epidermis torn wasted driven on end siding with the immanent vex; through trabecular songs approximating stuttered oceanics; unremitting wakes out from fleshing the contact of sound unmade coming already met finally conscripts around its involution of new-new phase transitions in the crypt. might just feel like finding other ways to lurk without shops opening shutters onto seashores we couldn't discern with our hands. a strip of air whips from essential to essential, right down to this essence of evasion so much that it takes us along a delphic soma, with the same interminable sky we love this something that we are at all, strick in daylighting cycles and collextions in never having been back from a felled miasma. the night holds philharmonics we forget as long as there's also the promise of a sea without terminus far out-from the familial subsumptions of an unshakable key it lit until years later. yard overflows an expanse of planetary mains wherewithal the impress bespeaking encountered restless othering encounters. feels like coruscating an exsense we wear outside of ourselves for the life on track. listen instead for the elated skip, boldened, elastic. to seven blacks killed in a septet and more caught slipping in and out sing but here we're the ones that need help living how to see our emissions hum

msdnittoN Contemporary

hell a lot colder and purely unrepeated. our residues are animaterial,
brush cosubstantial, marauding a failed subjectivity lest the dead and
dying smoke a personal orbit they pretend to dip, outlast yr tug set,
overlay a more tabernacular beam, but still give for u and yr friends
itarent twilights yr the black night, doused levity, fish, fish of an Indigo
rasa, staring blank aboriginal salt back, still clapping the same broad
sways of high windrush outside our lanes and streets for one of the
people's cracked anathemic songs saying true say we run upon how we
sounded lyric for lyric like you think is that what you think? stepping yr
way out of this poetry for what was left unsaid of yr sense of touch
through feeling these sensations I can feel yr tares in our gilded fabric
like granular scansion stress audible to remission, as lysed sentimental
house and harbor for the immanent vex but must not but nobody knows.
crypt in resounding this or that metaphoric hylomorph thrusting a black
kid/s spit an arial pleonasm makes (in us) sit and shit an organising
principle we don't leave outside or inside our ruinous flooring, teeth and
skin, lip, nail, eyelid, breath and phosphorous, more spit without making
duppy and instead, when I don't know you but you must know who I am,
sincopated plumes and shattered. in blockades there's echo in
compress. corners on corners lyric vex on long sequesters. black
eviscerating givenness taking us up in the clouds. seeded liminal looks
gave ancestors enfleshed. you can't see their reflection's glare of
sunlight rim they're too alloyed and all day artfully black boreal.
blacklight visioning the same splitting of black action going to this place
called nowhere fast and it's got to work. irreal, hard flat, never says
what, because they're there from aeons and rhythms. rhythms of work
setting pace around the bits of anamorphological rhythms of work
setting pace around the bits of grim shard ice. shadows be barely
viewed crossing blocked-off lays cresting a pure state lexis behind the
curb in ethereal offshot rules of threes unprotected still built to task /
yet/ nobody made us. just roll back abiding, script a deadweight ride;
speak an aporetic crowd in a burst daydream on a realer
rhododendron. can't then CCTV a slice of black worldsheet the way we
lay of the land under streetlight mystic arch. We Talk. ethereal dreaming
that we crossed shortcircuiting all cadences of the heartbeat. no
change to the words untimely bussing that we hear us from all ends of
the visceral clamor in single myriads unseen from or regarded. we made
realness forever return burst baseness of verse to link us outside the

Nottingham Contemporary

yard without lines or the emotions running on pull up in the darkness leading deep enough to get us lost in remaining in a long list of stares. whole arrays of sun carrying inside each celestial rhythm of the words step getting across personal back from earth inna movement without change making us see change all the long remembering our share of coalescence. what are we to look at. and how saying it won't figure a line of flight Jade of fluidity pon air we dress in. glints of sunset eye's touch water's humming mid-drift out of focus rotates its pulsations the planetary montage we feel out for. so much there history just settled. ark leveling suite of denuded sea greens into fuchsia pink f majors breaking live notes and looks away like surf. but evidence of things not seen as black blue vermillion. deck of flesh over dusk in it's already dawning. dust kicked up dawning, also a witness of truth. morbidity leaving heat glow or inclement lysis with only tertiary gleans to signal dying woven into the impossible seen stirring each of our siphonophores. diasporic at the same time seeing us in our lofty auginary leave. roving where we are all the way to this thing dispersed. round here we got our place in the sun saying even then what happens to our straining to feel. leaning bent without leaning in to close our eyes and see wind inbetween the oppressed in times gone. mythos spurious around sameness of exhaustion. homeless agitation appears / just wants to hallucinate eerie conjectures of decay detritus that we breathe from their dry phores an ashen finesse. we hosts of their memory's high water mineral echoes of grief / can't help but fall in and out with the dark wash together. held up jettison away from self-snaring / couldn't get away whispering ultra marine. we speak in undulations knowing full capture in escape used to meet in each other's pockets when there's no more sacred in the small outside. no one else heard the system in the stoma. none listened in for love but for apotheosis / rewrote the blank, indeterminate main. fleet of foot through stone yr marsh meadow wood unlike daystar ritual ritual still life the fuck the police a black body is sacred everywhere leaving no clues unlike daystar ritual ritual still life the fuck the police a dead black body is sacred everywhere leaving no clues, raised interlacing a curious sleet in the iris under a deep rift. Thank you.

45:35

Sandeep Parmar: Hi, everybody, it's really lovely to be asked to read for this event. And I'm sorry, I'm not able to be there in person. Thank you to

msdnittoI Contemporary

Sofia, and to Ryan and to the others organising this event for having me and also looking forward to catching up with on this event to see my fellow readers as well. I'm going to start off by reading a poem by Mina Loy, partly because I think the theme is something to do with I think the body. And Loy has always been a really important kind of shaping force in my own work, and it's always nice to serve somebody else's work other than your own. So I'm going to read from a series called Italian Pictures which is early on in her career and it's called Costa Magic. Her father indisposed to her marriage, and a rabid man at that. My most sympathetic daughter, make yourself a conception as large as this one here, but with yellow hair. From the house issuing Sunday dressed, combed precisely. SPLOSH! Pours something viscous, malefic, unfamiliar. While listening up I hear my husband mumbling, mumbling, mumbling at the window. Malediction, incantation, under an hour. Her hand to her side pressing, suffering, being bewitched, Cesira fading, daily daily feeble softer. The doctor Pthisis, the wise woman says to take her, so we following her instruction, I and the neighbour take her— The glass rattling, the rain slipping, I and the neighbour and her aunt bunched together, and Cesira droops across the cab. Fields and houses pass like the pulling out of sweetmeat ribbon from a rascals mouth till a wheel in a rut jerks back my girl on the padding, and the hedges into the sky. Coming to the magic tree, Cesira becomes as a wild beast, a tree of age. If Cesira should not become as a wild beast, it is merely Pthisis this being the wise woman's instruction. Knowing she has to die, we drive home, to wait, she certainly does in time. It is unnatural in a Father, bewitching a daughter, whose hair down covers her thighs. Instead of reading from my second collection Eidolon which is about Helen of Troy I'm actually going to go back and read from my first collection which I very rarely read from um and just sort of picturing read a few things and then read some newer stuff. Invocation. To be of use, but nothing, will decant. Perilous consonant, seized as jewel, betrothed as fire is to the ordinary. A spell; a note. Combatant of will and engraver of sighs. Poultice to the hush, to the whispers of women in corded rooms and to the glows beneath doorways. Purchaser of anointments, slatherer of knives and spoons. Rind of merciless ends and clothier of borrowed aliases. Trenchant penurist, hoarder of silvered lakes. Post chaise bending on the whim of royal deliverance. Coin to whom there is no weight to match the fruit of emptied forest. Animal to cistern, face to

Nottingham Contentory

coda, god to neither me to neither them, to she. To whom one is infinitely married, and yet cannot be afixed. Enter. All that spills over from my able palm is you. Since this reading is sort of based in Nottingham, where I was born many years ago, I'm going to read a poem that is about my mother's life. She grew up in Derby and my father came to marry her when he was in his 20s, and they lived in Nottingham. So this is a bit about her life. And my father is really very good at sort of telling the history of his life and also of our ancestors and he's sort of a—I don't know—repository of knowledge and information when it comes to all things to do with family. But my mother is, I suppose, partly by virtue of being a woman, of course, and in Punjabi culture, less cognizant of these things, and I think even of her own life, not perhaps as much being the agent of it, and of her destiny. She keeps her silences. And so some of the silences are here. And because when I was writing my PhD on Mina Loy, and I spent a great deal of time in her archive at Yale. And Loy herself wrote five or six different versions of her life story, all of them sort of in some way incomplete or pieced together and quite, in some cases, quite fragmentary. And I do a lot of archival work with modernist women writers and have done since. So I'm really interested in how archives present lives, sometimes much more faithfully than the kind of coherent biographies that we receive, either autobiographies written by people or or in fact, those biographers who attempt to try to draw some sort of conclusion because of course, there is no conclusivity about any life. Archive for a Daughter. November 1972, Derby. A dance card embalmed in sweat. Her ruthless curve of palm mowing the carpet into sheaves before a gas fire. Liquidescant virgin in a purple dress. Oil paint, shaded avocado, umbrella sun-wings. Box 2, folder 20 'Early Married Life' a single page: recto, a fashionable centre parting, verso, consonants: midnight affair nuclear affair bleach affair. Watermark indecipherable. [But here we are jumping ahead] The archivist notes that no exact birth date is known. An already Western dressed 6-year-old reads the headlines of English newspapers for party tricks. Her black eyes are blunt and unequivocal like the prophecies of pharaohs. In a Punjabi village, she and her impeccable mother, gemstoned, oracular, princess a vernal Causeway. Box 1, folder 2 'Emigration'. The BOAC stewardesses Max Factor crinkled baskets of sweets to soothe the girl's swinging, impatient feet. Aviation—a risky endeavour in 1963—levels a curse at her progeny. Aerophobia—her own daughter's—fear of the air

msdnittoI Contemporary

between home and exile collapsing. Box 1, folder 7 'Education'. Homelands Grammar School for Girls. Miss Moore leans across an oak sea and parquets a line of future mothers. Her bovine sympathies, neatly pressed, tentacle towards the only Indian in the class. The Georgian battlecross marking her forehead, kindly and thoughtfully, segregates. The girl bounds wildly through the Public Library—Huxley to her 11-year-old mind suggests individuality—but the Savage's feet recommend no one specific exit. Folders 8-17. Unbound Notebook, mostly unreadable: I thought I could become a doctor and asking found I could not think to ask to become anything. The archivists notes that these pages are not continuous. Refer to Box 2, folder 10 'Correspondence'. A photograph of a prospective husband and several handwritten credentials. Box 3, folder 1 'Notes on Motherhood'. Nursery—pram—groceries—pram, doctor's visit—cucumbers and half lengths—over each shoulder some conspicuous intellect—Husband academic wife typist. She door-to-doors Hoovers, Avon, thick rosaries of factory lace, while her children pop tic-tacs for invented ailments in plastic houses. Nottingham hurls snowballs at her black turbaned gentlemen. Soaked typescript, fair copy of a life— When she asked her parents for a spare suitcase for an exodus, they replied 'my child nothing is ever spare'. Box 4, folder 1, 'Exile'. 1985, Vancouver—ablaze with cherry blossoms from here to the kindergarten. We arrived with one steel pot, a bag of lentils and an onion. Folder 2. 1987, North Hollywood—submarine fences route Thanksgiving potatoes, one a piece. My daughter reads Laura Ingalls Wilder to her menagerie of dolls. Raft sails calmly on. Folder 3. 1989, Oxnard—gifted children are pursestrings. We mind their collegiate years with interest. El Rio wizens to a stockpile of citrus and rental agreements. Folder 4, 1995, Ventura—Bibled to real estate, gold blazers cinch round a wade of blonde, leathered adulterers. The neighbours tend to their god-plots of lawn and hedge. Box 5, folder 1 'Drs Parmar'. She saunas with the ladies of the Gold Coast— one Japanese ex-comfort woman, one savvy señora goldbuckled and multi franchised. Stanford, Northwestern, Harvard, London, Cambridge—and when my husband's sisters wept because I had no sons, I said I have two doctors (one of body, the other mind) and sent my uterus via Federal Express to the village, with my compliments! On the verso, written in ink, is a page from Box 1, folder 8 [misplaced]. I remember clearly when I knew that I would one day die. I was on the toilet, and I was 11. The bathroom was white and

Nottingham Contemporary

oblivious. Loy returns to Paris. Le Bonheur the bloodless mechanics of travel. Kicking at space is no arrival. You collect to the child you left now provincial and round from planning menus and improving her script for four years in an Italian village. Giulia's negrita joella. Her curls browning illegitimately. The rue Campagne-Premier, a grey, hatched widow-latch for a Poiret with fine bone structure. Refurbished vanities choir on workshop tables, address books somersault, and a life is written from 'Z' to pseudonym. Curving fingers smelt graphite into cracks. Fine noses of inherited genius, blackly spar and bring turtles to your babies, note their approving babble for use in their trades. Elbowed pages, snapped under books, crooked deletions migrate in the direction of an echo. Festooned shadows bend over your youngest. Fa bene, dusting pillboxes, carrying coloured glass from one childhood to the next. Just finish by reading some newer work. That last time, of course, was also about Mina Loy and about those extraordinary archival manuscripts which are still unpublished. But Loy does have a long autobiographical poem that one can find if one has the right edition from 1982. So I'm going to read now from a poem that is based on the kind of the antiquarian, I suppose art historian, probably more, more appropriately Winckelmann. Winckelmann, it's called on On Desire and this sort of touches on his life and his sort of story, but he was, he was kind of the father of a sort of ideas of beauty and nobility connected to a kind of classical structure, to sculpture particularly. And so, he said, he was also a very, very interesting person that had met a very unfortunate fate. So I will, some of those things will be touched on in this poem. On Desire. What is the gift? To receive—she is touched, or the scuttle of her heart is mollified by its touch. O to be touched by the gift, like being singled out and blessed by infirmity. The gift—simulacrum of love—and he who gives it does so, knowing that by giving it to me nothing could really be gained. Black corollary of love—go trouble younger hearts. The man who wrote that phrase the breadth of a single hair: noble simplicity and grandeur also boasted: 'Ich esse gut und Ich scheisse gut'. He could articulate it, and wanting it, had that gift of seeing that somewhere between these vivifications of 'consummate' and 'evacuate' is the completion of desire. Eugenics of art—Homer mentions no pitted face, no pox, Arcangeli, who would disembowel the Abbé, was not the tone-deaf Olympian Alicibaides, fondling boys in the gymnasium, but a disfigured man of no account. Winckelmann wrote, much before his fated

msdnittoN Contemporary

friendship: The Archangel of Concha's face 'glows with indignation and revenge.' Turning over rubble in the Villa Albani, Winckelmann observes the broad repose of time. Gleam of white light on a stone neck, on a pedestal of bone. Perhaps some conquest, in a preternatural hour, had carried off her head? Or trampled her face to dust. Either way, he is sure that finding it is beyond his office. The absence makes her animal. He does not note this in his catalogue. What had Rhodopis said, all those hours, to the ugliest of men? When she heard his fables, what love stiffened in the folds of garments that could hook itself to the promise of one wayward slipper? Chewing her thumbnail through his long-winded tale, she may have at last excoriated: 'Enough of your riddles!' Here is the apple, and there is the tree, appearing ordinary. Where is the tree? Despondent wife of Socrates, young and ancestrally equestrian. Xantippe (meaning 'blonde horse') whom the old man would not woo. He, a coquette in the world of men—A gadfly—she could only buck. True art in imitation or true propaganda? David's Death of Socrates alarmed the salon of 1787. The scroll of Plato's feet, Death warrant ... or versifications of Aesop? Wise son of a midwife, who in his final hours reared like the horse of Napoleon Bonaparte. Slave of Samos, gnarled hunchback, deformed fabulist. Your animal phrase soils the footstools of Europe. There—and also there—a fleet of eyes, each blackly identical out-minister the other. An unctuous industrialist pats, his thorax. Dissolute parthenogenist, man vis-à-vis his instincts—we sniff our own blood. How you have multiplied in us like an incandescence that hauls itself up from the dark to colour a woman's cheeks? Slave girl, Cinder girl, Horse-of-a-Different-Colour. The wise busts of Herculaneum angle the torsos of headless girls. Withdrawing the candle from his window that opens onto the Porta Salaria Winckelmann carries thoughts of his pupil's contours Down tapestried corridors to bed, following his moral windmill. Thanks very much for listening.

1:06:14

Linda Kemp: Welcome, and thank you again to Donika Kelly, James Goodwin, and Sandeep Parmar, for those superb readings. Sadly, Donika, James, and Sandeep are not here this evening, to talk about and explore their readings with us. Instead, I will reflect on a few themes and in particular, the socio poetics, which emerged for me from the readings we've heard. The chat is also open if anyone would like to

drop in comments or reflections of their own, and we could talk about those as well. Following on from James's intriguing workshop yesterday evening, the theme of socio poetics emerges in all of tonight's readings, all in very different ways across the form of the poems and material influencing the poetics, which we have been listening to. In his reading, James uses the line 'writing is our passing through'. And tonight's readings seem to offer alternative ways of thinking, feeling, reading, writing, and maybe even knowing a little more about our passing through, or our curiosity about our passing through, questioning what we're passing through, what we're making as we're passing through, and, perhaps importantly, what we leave behind. James talks of transience and embodiment. In his reading, he says, 'We don't know where we are, but we must be something other than who we are'. And this, who we are, and what we might be weaves as an under and overcurrent through what we've been listening to this evening. Donika and Sandeep indicated some autobiographical elements within their work, and presented poems which entered into a dialogue with forms of becoming, which are identifiable as family structures. The poems we heard from Donika are rooted in myth which provides a leaping off point for her poetic exploration of personal history, and by extension, a form of making, unmaking and remaking of both personal and social histories. Poetry by the poet Rita Dove, offers a perhaps touchstone, and point of conversation for some of these poems, building part of Donika's socio poetics. In contrast, James develops a socio poetics in dialogue with and constructed through language drawn from many philosophical texts, experimentality as a process and processes, and a distinct black socio poetics, which he addresses as corporeality and embodiment. The visual component of James's reading brings into this poetics an ocular as well as oral dimension, inviting questions about what we think we are perceiving in this poetry and this poetics, raising the question of what is this embodiment James's poetry is inviting us to consider and bringing us as listeners closer into. Although different socio poetics, and also I would argue a sociable poetics, is offered in Sandeep's poetry, which seems to both seek and find a socio poetics through her literary predecessors, which is here located in the tradition of the avant garde, and in particular, women avant garde poets. The modernist poet Mina Loy provided a touchstone for poems we've listened to this evening. The poetics and poems we've listened to all registered the

msdnittol Contemporary

violence of social and justices at the level of what language does and can do. Donika, James, and Sandeep collectively, have opened a space where we can consider ourselves, our world, and worlds, and how we continually make and remake ourselves, our histories, and perhaps also our futures, through language. Poetry here is a sociable social practice and perhaps, particularly now more pressingly, the social is a sociable, poetic practice. I'd like to thank again, Donika Kelly, James Goodwin, and Sandeep Parmar for their readings this evening. Thank you so much.

1:11:26

Olivia Aherne: Thank you, Linda. And yeah, thank you all so much Donika, James, and Sandeep, for the beautiful and thought provoking words, and Linda for your insightful reflections as well. Before we end, I would just like to invite you all to our next Five Bodies session, which will take place on Thursday the 11th of February next year. We'll be welcoming three wonderful artists and writers. We have Jesse Darling, Johanna Hedva, and Kameelah Janan Rasheed all joining us. So I do hope you'll join us in the new year. And for now, enjoy the rest of your evening. Thank you, everyone.

Colophon

Curator: Sofia Lemos and Dr. Sarah Jackson

Programme Assistant: Ryan Kearney

Technician: Jim Brouwer