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Five Bodies

Live transcript

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SPEAKERS

Sofia Lemos, Jack Thacker, Rowan Evans, Vicky Sparrow, J.R. Carpenter

0:10

Sofia Lemos: Good evening folks. Hi, my name is Sofia Lemos, I'm the curator of public programmes and research at Nottingham Contemporary, a contemporary art centre in the Midlands in the UK. And this evening, it's my pleasure to welcome you to our online poetry series Five Bodies. For those of you who are tuning in for the first time, Nottingham Contemporary works with artists, with thinkers, with poets, to expand on how research and practice intertwine in contemporary art and visual cultures. This is the fifth session of our year long poetry series, which looks at how creative practices of attention, of invention, of experimentation, might help us develop new sensibilities. The programme welcomes some unexpected pairings and drifts. But most importantly, it welcomes multiple voices to reflect on how poetics is not the recognised or given modalities of form, but the reconciliation of feeling and knowing for creative practice. Five Bodies has been imagined in collaboration with Sarah Jackson at Nottingham Trent University, who has led the critical politics research group since 2015, a group that explores critical creative practice, hybrid methodologies and experimental thinking. I'd like to take this opportunity to show our gratitude to tonight's poets, J. R. Carpenter, Rowan Evans and Vicky Sparrow who have kindly accepted our invitation to contribute three incredible readings for our session this evening. I'd also like to thank Sarah, Olivia Aherne and Jack Thacker for their invaluable support, developing the series and its sister workshops. And of course, a word of thank you to Nottingham Trent University and to the University of Nottingham for generously and graciously supporting our events, as well as acknowledging my colleagues James Brouwer, Catherine Masters and Ryan Kearney for the

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technical support this evening. Tonight's event includes a 20 minute reading, well three 20 minute readings, followed by a five minute tea break, and a joint conversation with our guests. You're warmly welcome to share your thoughts, your questions, your comments, your references on the YouTube chat. As usual, we'll fold these into the conversation. And please mind that we have an AI driven live captioning system, a link to which can be found on the YouTube chat that will open in a separate window on your browser, within which you can adjust the scale and the layout to suit your requirements. So without further ado, I'm delighted to introduce you to our host this evening, Jack Thacker, who is a postdoctoral research assistant in critical poetics at NTU, and supports the research group. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines including PN Review and Black Box Manifold, The Clearing, and Caught By The River, as well as on BBC Radio 4. In 2016, he won the Charles Causley International poetry competition, and has been the poet in residency at the Museum of English rural life. And more recently, writer in residency at the lighthouse, Poole. His debut poetry pamphlet, Handling from 2018 is published by two rivers press. So thank you all for listening. Thank you all for coming. And I'll turn over to Jack now. Thank you.

3:35

Jack Thacker: Welcome to this Five Bodies reading. Thank you for the introduction Sofia. As Sofia mentioned my name is Jack, I'll be chairing the event this evening. I help to coordinate the critical poetic research group, which is led by Sarah Jackson at NTU, and is a home for writers, artists, artists, scholars, who work across critical and creative practices. And it's a great pleasure to collaborate with Sofia and the team at Nottingham Contemporary on this poetry reading series and the associated workshop series. We hope you've enjoyed the series so far if you've seen the previous events. If you're new to this or you've joined us previously, you're in for a real treat tonight, we're joined by three really exciting and inspiring poets in J.R. Carpenter, Rowan Evans and Vicky Sparrow. I'll just give you a sense of how things are going to work this evening. I will introduce all three poets at the beginning so as not to disturb the flow of their performances. Then there'll be a short five minute break after which I'll return with the poets and will enter into a discussion about their work and the connections between them. So without further ado, I will introduce the poets and I'll start with Rowan Evans.

Rowan Evans is a poet, composer and sound artist whose most recent

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chapbooks are *The Last Verses of Beccan* which is published by the wonderful Gilmore press, and which won the Michael Marks award for poetry in 2019. And another chapbook is *cante jondon mixtape*, which was published in 2017. He received an Eric Gregory award in 2015. And a selection of his work appears in *Penguin Modern Poets seven: These Hard and Shining Things*. Rowan is the editor of Moot press, and artistic co director of the performance company FEN. He is currently undertaking practice based PhD research in modern poetry and in mediaeval language at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Following Rowan will be Vicky Sparrow who is a Nottingham based poet, teacher and researcher specialising in poetics. She currently teaches creative writing at the University of Nottingham, and edits reviews for the *Journal of British and Irish innovative poetry*. She holds a PhD on the poet activist Anna Mendelssohn and was recently a fellow at the Wellcome Trustm researching the intersections between poetry and therapy. Sparrow's poems can be found in *Front Horse*, *Writing Utopia*, *datableed*, *Litmus*, and elsewhere, and her debut poetry pamphlet *Notes To Selves*, is published by Zarf editions.

Finally, we'll hear from J.R. Carpenter, who is an artist, writer and researcher working across performance, print, and digital media. Her web based work, *The Gathering Cloud* won the new media writing prize in 2016. Her poetry collection *An Ocean of Static* was highly commended by the forward prizes in 2018. Her most recent collection, *This is a Picture of Wind* was one of the *Guardians* best poetry books in 2020. Carpenter is a fellow of the Eccles Centre at the British Library, and the Moore Institute at MUI Galway. She is currently writer in residence at the University of Alberta. I was lucky enough to sit in on J.R's workshop for the Five Bodies workshop group yesterday evening, and I was inspired by what was a truly embodied and perspective changing experience. And so I'm so excited to listen to her read today. And I'm excited listening from the other poets. So without further ado, I will hand over to Rowan.

07:44

Rowan Evans: He brings northward. crossaing, wavestraig, waebhestray, wild, regain, foam, flagra, sanguine, sealfraig, sabhagewind, mbounding, seethrich, pleaslid, mbitween, dolfang, beckon, seabrae, clustu, Connacht,

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caindel, tides of Albu, northwaig, not, newsless, Ercsland, praises, amrae, undu, Albion, litnae. His body on grey waves.

Brighten legal theory. image of brightnais, witness, fairrge, fire, Niall's caindel, relaig, chancel, bricht, scantiss trees, black, burnib mute, earth igniss, smocaig, dull embrae, wintair light, tincture, cloud clochait, pierce, rednocht beneath, haar, be Beacon to, thrown to, deep recess, be limit, to ward, (no long ship, not found in a body.

not scant thanks birds give. low on, druim soundaing, oystercair, daylig n-ecco, unduir, kittiwaib, flocktib, lurk, circum, sentinel, rabhen, circum, ridge, throwch, berdae, toll, radial, praisriek, announce, I am no ruirich, king of birds, gnathing, gnathought graelig gate, voice come, corbha, scarcely speak, his bard's prayer perhaps.

Thank you, Jack for that introduction. And lovely to be aware that there is an audience I can't see. So that was just a middle section from the last verses of Beccan, which was published by Guillemot a couple of years ago. And the text I was reading was was a combination of bits of old Irish from the poems of the seventh century monk Beccan mac Luigdec, who supposedly spent many years living in a small cave on the island of Rum, near the Isle of Eigg. And his text is written in old Irish, he also uses bits of Latin. And so my text there was written during a few weeks stay I had on the Isle of Eigg nearby when I was reading that work, and also making field recordings of the area, which became the sound design that you heard. And there's a full recording of the whole book up on my website as well. Okay, so I'm gonna read maybe a couple of things from the penguin selected, which is this one, like an advertising spiel now, which was published again a couple of years ago now.

This is a sequence called a method of path. And it takes as its entry I suppose. A few poems by John Clare, the Romantic poet, and particularly his his strange intrusions and interactions, quite violent interactions sometimes with birds. He described sometimes going into the woods and shaking trees and putting his hands into nests in order to try and cause birds to flee and reveal themselves. Which became an interesting way of thinking about the interiority of language and also the exteriority of language when we exist in a landscape, particularly when we're on our own and the idea of provoking or rummaging within ourselves. Yeah, it begins It begins with a short quote from

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Clare.

I've stood nor seen them till they flew away, John Clare, who responds, my field is Piebald, I no longer discipline myself to the visible, bearing as if toward a tower, ghosted in the total locality of the flurry, the white parts of birds, of the poem, holding it bald in my hand, the air is cold enough that snow doesn't melt, but compacts. Now writing is like the snow. Too much compaction, the hard kernel lacks air to buoy itself. It must be lain again with air. Snow spreading into prose. Sub spring clots each foot with intentional dark. There is a tremble, a rivulet poses out of a wild broken water table, subsuming hoof, consuming with the river itself. And by this gesture shows that substance may rise through permeable ground. And by this, how right we are to wait. And that waiting is a verb defined by spring. This course of becoming unmute, remet, and breathing as a lapse in pressure allows it so, now they are coursing through the scrub as well as thee. Telos and anterior, oh many antlered wept. Again a nearby makes us still, moving only as much to empty, to match,

a slowing flit of the head. So our voicings halt and drop, and so our subjects coagulate to this one. Again Robin. In token of beckoning, succumb, the flip, a hush.

Still remember how the others would treat us, the acceleration, and re enter the poem so I might startle it into showing itself. Writing is disruption owing to its presence and must. One shows a green back, yellow, drawing, gone, that other copse of name and clutter, what I've come to collect, nor data, nor song, now this kindling digress, now this. Violence, hallowed has this violence upon myself. So speak. I have seen the nape of my works in retreat.

That's really interesting coming back to some of this work that I haven't read for a while and also having not done a reading in person for about a year in front of physical people. A lot of the poems I'm going to read this evening seem to take place at springtime and also springtime as a moment of release or moment of becoming unmute as the poem puts it, which feels prescient and interesting given the last year. Okay, I'm gonna read now, a little bit from the If a leaf falls press chapbook, which came out in 2017. Here's another cover, cante jondo mixtape, and I think a lot of my work interacts directly or indirectly with other authors, often dead authors, often very long

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dead authors in the case of the last verses of beccan, and also my work with old English texts as well. This particular sequence is written in dialogue or imagined dialogue with Lorca, more recently dead, and takes as a point of departure I suppose Jack Spicer's collection After Lorca, in which he has a sort of brilliant, bizarre back and forth between Jack Spicer, the ghost of Lorca, and Lorca, complaining about how bad Spicer's translations of Lorca are. But these are all poems that are written usually at springtime around Easter when I was lucky enough to travel to Spain a few consecutive years with my mum, which again feels like a long lost joy and privilege to be able to have done that. Yeah.

I sat outside the house for an hour waiting for the green door to open but it's Holy Week, and you don't take guests in the afternoon. I'm thinking it might be better if someone else did this, and also of a red gold manticore. But an old man has arrived and sat down to smoke. And no, it is not you. He wears loafers, and not the white boots imprinted with chamomile. You are no bloodline through the city, nor Magnolia. Probably the bricks have touched you. You are a name that grows poems around it. You'd say a wound. Now I fear the old man has begun to expire and between the leaves are theorems, sanctuary, clear water. We'll talk some more. Oh, chrome poet. Stand up and the world is void, then ochre, then filled with feet, yellow scraps and incremental salves. I thought there's a better cooling against Empire than violins raising tackle to a kinky moon because, falling asleep and because, waking, drops of holy oil in broad water. Day is broad enough. And hemisphere is only a habit of body drawn in outer stretch of light. The white road and white dust on the rim of boots where chamomile hones the verge. What's material is real flinches, or heat, and the old man smiling, knuckles near the sun, because, Christabel.

Orange blossom. He must record the light in columns, over the epitome. atrium of a lake, death of Lorca. In the diminishing acoustic, white cracked walls of the mission courtyard. full breaths over the mountain. Half breaths lain in heat, oranges, the acoustic diminishing, his mouth, a sodden cloth in his mouth, ink and vinegar, waking in white stations sending into them vowels. Something he wouldn't imagine in other Brickery, In other words, hard brown Andalucia, olive green Andalucia. A second light in the gorge. Dangerous little walk away. Ask him is he thirsty? Yes, those are flamingos. Beauty overbore me so much movement in it. If I had a voice of math, only

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he must record the light. Only this orange blossom. Said the virgin, said the mudejar, this would be the spring of algebra. Snow is falling and bells on a hillside where there isn't the body of Federico Garcia Lorca. Is it hard to remember? Flesh remembers little, not the faint under cage of movement, of body, of heart, or yellow on lava stone. Most faces aren't much like dim altars when poems frontline the assay. The search engine I saw his face in is beautiful, all the doors in the Citadel are shut. I speak the Citadel and begin to cite the great many names.

This is another short poem to another poet. Quite an old one now. It's a letter to Emily Dickinson, but it was also written for Peter Gizzi, who was a sort of teacher mentor for for about a year about 10 years ago now. I pull out a tray of horned beetles then your poem tact of genus. It's not my birthday anymore. I've never been to Massachusetts. Guess you know the bones inside of flags spellet. New England ruins, heavy Red Touch a brittle flight, and lone voice, feeling for granite. Other Poems, whole Sierras engraved on an ear bone. It bores to flood in dreaming. Between sleeping he holds salves to his chest like a flush, friend, your loan Mandrake, number unclenches in the throat to a Robin. We'll speak landscapes, A Tunis unLatinated, and those ash trees were painted torsos when this started to write.

I'm gonna read a short sequence now of three poems that are much more recent, called withstances, which were published online by Granta back in the December I think of last year. And they form part of practice based PhD research that I'm nearly completing now, which works a lot with early mediaeval texts and languages mainly Old English, and Old Norse. And the particular poem this this one is in dialogue with and partially through translation, but also to response and a louder echo chambers that the poem might be thought to create is a text called the the nine Herbes charm. It's a medicinal charm or remedy poem found in a large compendium of medical charms. So there are several wild flowers and names of, or translated names of flowers in here. The title itself begins with this strange phenomenon that you often get when translating from Old English to modern English, which is words which appear to be very similar to modern usage, but which have completely contrary meanings. The word with in Old English can often mean against, in contrary to, so a remedy would be, would typically be titled, with a stitch so against a stitch, or with a worm. And that idea of contrariness and also both both contrary and harmonious existence is something that the

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poem is interested in, both ecologically and politically. And the third poem is a sort of riposte against the co-option at the moment of early mediaeval history by very reductive nationalist and fascist narratives, which is something I'm very interested in interrogating. with stances.

All underfoot locked in yellow and white, constellated spear-leek in flower increasing, through deor-hall and freaked gully, reminded by guide light, you recall unlettered and unmarked, bluebell at the melded word, great proclamation we stood with, but with is against, accompaniment in Contra. So you withstand as everyone will know, the purple song but not what it means, the force of III or VIII or XXX, and the Herb's surge needing some recap some kind of recuperation withstand us, and through and through, remind declare establish name. I alone know a running stream that is recovery partly and dim sweat of a day fever, exertion of pushing through the flushed wood to go in company protected from flying harms, while dense work of sapling hides true contours. Only alternations now of effort of shared injury in afternoon light, one Broad way open East.

Each one with another pink with the yellow, resisting or coming to name a clench within by limit of time, one eyelid holds another (improbable pupil of fern) while travelling is a loathing inwardly, powerful and greatly sepaed. Less than more and more the less if lesson loosen in lurid flora, each flight a harm or avoidance of harm, a thrush discs from a fist of Rowan into VII woruldes, ear-harm, head harm by III and by XXX. The spear-leek is rotten the dead-nettle red, caught in naming the offered din and speke of things visible or audibly visible the circumference of each body apparent, so step here, so shriek this, whereas the jay, it's skew and wising as an absent word of waetre of axshes and of asking shall betoken the holy sealfe. Also, also, ealso.

(against old England), Gonomil argomil marbumil, the land is plural, many fielded cannot name ourselves. So swift in winter some kind of weapon, drank the wurm, burned the documents. A crow at the apex now jacketed in wind or knowingness, its mind agleaw, framed by or framing night is a burning coal at one centre, where yours is no magic, is only wurm sickness, your 'surge of patriotism, real kind, old kind,' that only marks others ungecyndelic. In Oblivion of definition by edges and perceived attack, the language of threat, when they come among our troop, is doomed hunt-logic meaning 'threatened by outside forces' will only justify the hunt, do you hear gonomil argomil

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marbumil, turn to red vapour the solidity of harm-words 'belonging' by cities rising argent in the nightfield. So sing this lay to the right ear hereafter, sing this galdor, no mild argot this.

and that last one integrated a short spell in mock old Irish, gonomil argomil marbumil, which might mean something like kill the beast, slay the beast, and appears with a drawing of a man with a pointy hat and a beard in a manuscript in the BL, which I would love to share with you, but I can't show you at the moment. Okay, I'll just I'll think I'll just read one more thing if that's okay. I'm going to use a bit of sound again. And this is a short sequence of poems, which partly use polyphonic or sound based translation of an Old Norse poem called Grogaldr, or the solo poem of Groa, who's a wise woman who imparts this strange riddling knowledge to a hero in some saga. I can't remember which one it is, but I became much more interested in the figure of groa herself rather than this particular soul building adventurer who interrogates her.

bjork, in Mega lumber margins every side, no till hell together. Ur rains rind horns rudder. Madr

action of a net and ravage full, for always likeness of body. Oss. Lidded disc. Will, an image, if Aurora. frost come.

seek the chemic. logr

arm's gold media, transit calm on a drugged sea, set full night, exit, scatter. naudr. Earth airlock may hold it there, Footloose, selfless, selfless sway. Fe, on the dark way, cut namer on the knife way near cursed she. Fe, then gold each first one fallen, for light. loanword senses a weight. Thurs, say 7 8 9 in a duration, stood at the door of the earth fast stones.

Thank you.

34:35

Vicky Sparrow: I'll glide through the courtyard. It will be early morning light and empty cold it will be dark, it will be the time that I hate most. A weird bone coloured mist. The colour of the bone coloured building will inhabit me. In the corner of the carpark will be the ghost of a car squatting with long hair. The

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wind will shuffle through it all. bloodless, Insomniac sky. Right. Hi, everyone. I'm Vicky. Really, really lovely to be here this evening. And just want to say a quick thank you to everyone at Nottingham Contemporary and also the critical poetics research group for inviting me, I'm so pleased to be able to be here. And thanks also to Jack and the other readers this evening. And yeah, Rowan that was a really fantastic kind of medicinal alchemical reading. Really great. So thank you, I'm looking forward to J R as well JR's work later. So I'm going to start by reading a few kind of short standalone poems, and then I'll read from a longer sequence in the middle. that's the kind of older sequence and then I'll close by reading some new work which is another longest sequence. So I'll start with just reading some some kind of shorter pieces to start with.

In the tickling room. Meanwhile, we move amongst the rows of this trapped space along to where the long sigh of outside goes uneasy to where these fingertips shed their trace. tak tak we talk and try to save our scraps, wound round to pass along and pin into the hard front of books, here between us too, wherever we are found, trying and wanting, too light and not light enough to face the exertion of the hold, the iron bed and grate, gathering in the dust that settles this embrace. Later, I would see you in this space and unclosed door and pass as fingers would along a crossing like those who became late who became before, us too. I found you in this looping pace. my knuckles fall with heat and that unbidden light you made that made my night's escape your trace and gather in the dust of this old place.

signals. the sign tells me where I am Verchtal, where the trains run upside down through the buildings. She tells me about how language consoles us and how the sign scaffolds and the cars cling from beneath the iron work and it's the only way of learning how to lose she says running along the canal the water below the cars above no below above and she's waving to us now through the window and the canal is a river as the sign clings and she turns to me and is asking Is it true?

sounding out. under the door or hedgerow, under the gate is a there, a little gaze, there? It gazes unput Oh realise that there is something there before the line is drawn across like a curtain might be or up if yes it can see the horizon from there under the gate or dome of horizon crouch down help us to pick you and our arms up. Oh. Ah.

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The elegy of flowers. The walls are pastel blue that turn and open out onto all the flowers in the city. But they close in. Their statements reach up and grasp their petal trumpets and their petal blankets and their petal covers and grasping them down balled themselves up, close themselves. That happens in the evenings all across the city. There they hold their petals crouched over their heads. How can I open myself again? How can I ever reach towards the sunshine, so mulched with dark green oozes as I am? So crookedly cold, so crooked, and still the world that runs all over the stillness from which we shake?

Okay, the next poem I have, comes with some very low fi performance element, which involves me tapping a pen on a book,[tapping sound] like so. So hopefully you'll vaguely be able to hear that in the background. It comes with a kind of short epigraph from a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay, which is there isn't a train I wouldn't take no matter where it's going.

Fuel gauge. suitcase at my feet, I nudged towards the perspex booth. I trouble the edges of my passport with my thumb travel documents are like commas I think. the filmmaker Verner Hertzog walks from Munich to Paris to keep his friend alive. He knows that she will live until he arrives so he walks. It is an act of full faith of unreasonable reason, of keeping two lines apart. To get to work I take a long train, the railway I use was built by migrant workers. In the motion of the train carriage the mobility of the workers is monumentalised and reproduced. This is the night train crossing the border dum da dee dum on the postal order Auden's rhythm for the nightmare, enact as it describes somewhere between medium and message it makes a world. I fall hard into the luggage rack as the train jounces. a bruise in a straight line across my forearm will be platformed at the next station collapsed leakily a suspicious item. Mark says that goods become commodities on their way to market. It is in their travel that they are valorized I believe that's sorcery and it's the same for people, for we become objects on the road too. Once for three months I was banned from entering the borough of Westminster. I rerouted my bike, but I never knew if I could take the tube beneath the borough, subterranean meaning is indistinct. The art of travel is only a branch of the art of thinking, Wolstonecroft writes, travel is a branch line in the going somewhere of thought poetry. Another the tracks make familiar Runnels. I take a long haul flight once a year to the place my antecedents colonised not so very long ago.

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It is a source of shame. I plant my flag in the grey air it makes. When asked what America was like Stein said, conceive a space filled with moving. Signs repetition feel as if the word has moved not as if it has been repeated. The same word moving. Out of the train window I can see things passing through the reflection of myself, which is always true. I think how velocity shakes some people to pieces and other people it stabilises. Dickens' The Signal Man is about a premonition of someone's death causing their death. signal travels the wrong way so that death causes death. The signal actualizes its meaning. A novelist once took a line of my poetry. He told me he would. And he explained it was too small for an acknowledgment. It was about crossing borders, the line. Forensic oceanographers have demonstrated that military and rescue ships knew the migrants boat position in the left to die boat case, the sea must be safer than the land no matter where it's going, keeping two lines apart.

Okay, hopefully, you managed to hear that. So next I'm going to read from a section from a longer sequence which has very loosely as its source text, a mediaeval manuscript poem Perle, which I'm kind of bringing here because I know Rowan's an expert in mediaeval literature, although I'm definitely not. But this is Yeah, I mean, as I say it's a reimagining, it's in no way translation, but it kind of riffs on some of the some of the amazing language that is in that mediaeval manuscript poem as well.

Okay, so this is from poems for perle. A princely price you paid for Perle, in poems for Prynces pay We searched for what we lost by office light at night we wonder what happens when poetry is the language of the enemy within. keep off the grass there there is no ground for play in an office at night I dug dark earth in search of what I lost that precious perle withouten spot. We count rhythms out, now on, now off, rock in and out of life and death that teaches us humanity that teaches us humility, that builds towards our really living really living in our knowledge of the darkness and the light the argument went. harmony not harm the argument went. metre to set you free strong poet unconditionally really makes you think of false or false first a false first person I dug the soil of false first person dropped. I dug the soil I dug dark Earth in search withouten spot, human intention towards an object human or not. You sought her in the shallows you sought her in the depths, a princely price you paid for pearl she left you there bereft. on off. Perle is clad in Clart and Clot, a fantasy of Luf-dangere withouten spot, but perle was herself

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contaminated in such polluted seas. She could not help but be a well trod thread inside her head of blooms black and blue and red, her childlike verse come concatenated. You sought her here you sought her there a precious girl both dark and fair on off, to cross the stream that sodden Brim, your God forgives you and you him, in knowledge of our darkness and the light a community of risk for you the risk you risk for pleasures rhymes, to move you in and out of time, on off, my muddied hands a perfect precious perle, a culpable unease just crossing the stream now, come on come off, I dug dark Earth in search of what I'd lost. Where is it? In the work perle, where is it in the work, where is the crime in this work, where is the illness? Could we expect so little or so much a little life a little sin that started with women the beats his heart had set apart within, you must recall your innocent days of perle who cannot meet my gaze on off, my wretched will in the woe is wrought the gritted core of suppressed thought on off, a false first perle, how I knew you then, oh how the argument goes into a little inflection her parentheses always unclosed, so small so smooth her seed does worse at sangli and singular. A pearl so clad in clod and clart, the gritted centre of her heart, on off. my wet wretched will in woe is wracked across the stream she gazes back the beats his heart have set apart intact, on off. a false, a false first, a false first person I dug the soil a false first person stopped I dug the soil I dug dark earth in search withouten spot. I dug dark earth with my bare hands believe me when my mind says and on off. I mourned my perle that was their pend, my mind could not with her descend across the stream. I see her gleam as blooms black and blue and red circle to any crown perle's head on off. Oh how I knew you then so the argument goes what price paid perle, the sudden wet law like the screen in between us I dug through dark soil hands Earthen with toil on off. Perle took me in and out of hell I thought I could that I could not unspell on off. I took a hole into my soul My precious perle, my nameless girl, perle in clot and clod is clad I dug dark earth with all I had on off.

right. I'm just checking the time. So, sorry, bear with me. Okay, so the next, the last thing I'm going to be reading from is a new sequence which hopefully will be perhaps published later on this year. This is the sequence I wrote in January this year. So the I think the context of the of the pandemic is definitely visible in the masks of various other objects in the poem. So the sequence is called standins.

And all that year we held our thumbs waiting for the alerts to stop, sliding

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our fingers across our phones joking about drinking in parks, rules of three, watching the police cars slowly crawl up and down the canal through the sides of our eyes. I'd lean in replacing my scarf muttering not now we'll pick up more but my watch kept telling me the time and we still caught the ceasing alerts in each other's voices for a long time after and even when I felt my liquid legs began to coalesce. I shook my fatty flesh, Don't leave me to my fate I wobbled, but I tried not to come apart in front of you gazing down at me from the other side of the net. The distant budding is gentle and occasional and goes straight to my insides. I repair my fraying laptop flex with thick white tape until it looks like a plaster cast on a spindly arm that can't bend its elbow anymore. My skin has lost its elastic too and is too soft now and dries so slowly, I can't recognise the folds and newest foros which will become a runnel for my spilling patches. The grey chair beneath me squeaks I don't know how to set the air going again, or what presses me to keep me upright. It's a dam that holds the shifting mass to hammer a nail into the current of time is as much as I can do to hold you. There was always a cup of tea somewhere in that house gently getting cold all that year the staring steam milking over next to the little cubes I'd slice onto my toast that the ants had once sought out in a different land and been squashed as they were brushed away, I covered my mouth then too. It's sweet now and I don't know what to do with the lids you'd popped open on the jars and the gouges of peanut butter that were yours knowing I'll never be able to face the fruit in the bin I pour the cups of tea out into the Tupperwares, snapping their little wings closed as I stack them up in the fridge. I don't see your lips clearly but I try to sound out the shapes your words make The stops and vowels aren't imitated right in my habituated mouth my tongue making missteps across the hot dark evening beneath that metal curving portico, where I would grab your T shirt with freckles wooshed up close to your face to make some impassioned entreaty through the door where the lines taped and rubbery green marks you in or out, you watch him swirling the breathing air beneath the vaulting metal and wonder who sees the rising of our vaporous mouths? Who hears the mists escaping, who knows what lonely sounds we make? The cold got in my legs all that year, it stayed each pace. I walked on frozen land, the ground never softened, although I never wanted spring to comen in any case, the overreaching twigs snapped off as I brushed past nothing curved or bent, everything's edges were hard and the difficult reaching broke off as soon as it began. The hoarfrost stayed but never sparkled, they just greyed over the earth and inside the house, we move nothing. No one spoke

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the same and their words were greyed out now too and I forgot how to read, I had to count letters out of my fingers. And every time I found a grey hair of yours, I doubled over. I was grateful for something to hide in that year, take myself close, but everything leaked. The sandbags kept stacking up around the house, so I didn't know in the end where the windows were, or from where I might see the orange moon stuffed up against the black sky. I sought a lot and didn't find much in the granules even when they were shining on one surface or two glinting through the hessian, they cut the hands if you push them in, wet, they would clag like sugar, but a small plane of light sometimes opened up if you approached the window at the right angle A recognition would flash as you move like a sudden reflection. back along the canal I'm still showing you where there's danger above the fabric with my eyes but they slide and shadow the two of you instead. Walking just far enough away just close enough. I shift the papery skin and tuck my hair behind elastic loops as we all did that year, you bend down to him to mention something his big eyes listening, in the water the little fish bounce nose first against the green wall, making their way together down the edge, searching for food is all they do in their world under the breeze ruffled skin. They barely even see us watching.

Okay, thank you.

52:33

J.R. Carpenter: Thanks for that, that was really wonderful to hear both Vicky and Rowan. And I too would like to thank Jack and everyone at Nottingham Contemporary and Nottingham Trent. It's been really wonderful to listen to those two poets. When I was thinking about what to read today, I really wanted to read some work that I had not read before. And I will read some new work with you. But I realised that we're about a week shy of the three year anniversary of the publication of my book an ocean of static with penned in the margins. And it's such a massive beast even to me that I can't remember mostly what's in it. And I realised because there's a whole bunch of stuff in here I've never read before. So I wanted to read the last page of this book as a place to begin thinking about newer work. And the last page is an epilogue from a long poem called along the briny beach, which like all of the work in this book started as a digital text. Much like Rowan I tend to pillage from other authors. So I'll talk about what's going on in here after I read.

Along the briny beach, a garden grows with silver bells, and cockle shells,

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cockles and mussels, alive alive Oh. A coral orchard puts forth ruckus, pink blossoms, a bouquet of sea anemones tosses in the shallows. A crop of cliffs, hedges, a sandstone lawn mowed twice daily, by long green thumb waves rowing in in Rolling waves. The shifting terrain where land and water meet is always neither land nor water. And is always both. the sea gardens paths are fraught with comings and goings, seabirds in ones and twos, says their beak Kingfisher, parrot, scissortail. Changes in the zoology, causes of extinction from the ship the sea garden seems to glisten and drip with steam along a blue sea, whose glitter is blurred by creeping mist. The Walrus and the carpenter are walking close at hand. A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk along the briny storied waiting in between space wind blooms in the marram dunes. The tide far out the ocean shrunken, on the Bluff, a shingled beach house sprouts, the colour of artichoke. on the horizon, lines of tankers hang like Chinese lanterns. Ocean currents collect crazy lawn ornaments, shoes, and shipwrecks. cabbages and kings water bottle caps and thick white, snarls of string. At dawn, an ancient tractor crawls along the Briny beach, harvesting the tides leaves, the world's plastic the seas means.

And so so as I said that's an epilogue from a piece called along the briny beach which is part computer generated poem, endlessly generating a coastline. And it also incorporates lines from Elizabeth Bishop's the end of March. And Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Lewis Carroll's the walrus and the carpenter. So all very different views of coast lines mingling into each other and interrupting each other and trying to mess each other up a bit.

And I'm opening with that in part because I hadn't realised the the connection between that and the most recent digital piece that I did, which also combines three very different authors, the digital piece is called the pleasure of the coast. And that title already pillages from Roland Barthes' the pleasure of the text, except I exchanged up all the instances of the word text with the word coast. For that digital piece was commissioned by a research group at the University of Paris eight and the archive Nationale in Paris. A lot of my work works with archival material. I speak and read French, but I don't write French. So when I was working with this very visual archive of late 18th century French hydrographer, called Charles-Francois Beautemps-Beaupre, who sails on a colonial Imperial voyage for discovery in the South Pacific in the late 18th century. So I'm using all of his visuals but I also wanted to use

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text from his work and I wound up using texts that had French original and English translation, so I created a piece pillaging from the original French and from the English translations. I used the technical writing of Charles-Francois Beaufort-Beaupre, the data and philosophy of Roland Barthes, the pleasure of the course. And I also interjected fragments from French symbolist novel by Jean Giraudoux called Suzanne and the Pacific, which was published in 1921. And in this novel, a young woman gets, a young French woman gets shipwrecked and cast ashore on a island in the Pacific, in the region that this late 18th century hydrographer is mapping so if you're wildly confused, this weird sprawling mess of a text and transform it for the page, which is probably making it even more confusing right now. So this is sort of work in progress.

I am offered a coast, a coast chooses me. I summon simply a circular memory, the impossibility of living outside the Infinite coast. The coast must prove to me that it desires me. This proof exists, it is the coast what coast some examples at least. What I enjoy in a coast is not directly its content or even its structure, but rather the abrasions I impose upon its fine surface. I seat myself by the sea, drying it to gently toward me. I read, I skip, I continue, I look up, I dip in again. I make a horizontal plan in order to recollect such minute details, as sketches might not clearly explain. Thousands of unknown birds flutter around me like a new language. You are going to be disappointed. I cannot tell you the names of these marvels, as soon as I name, I am named, caught in the rivalry of names. I have discovered I have conjectured. I have always been careful I have never neglected to note. Here I enjoy an excess of precision, a kind of maniacal exactitude, a descriptive madness. I have measured I have obtained. I have unceasingly practiced, I have reason to believe. I am suddenly oppressed by my perfection. We are scientific because we lack subtlety. Science will light on the Pacific and drink it up like a blotter.

The coast needs its shadow. It's necessary clouds, hazy clouds, masked clouds, dappled clouds, grouped clouds, locked clouds, torn clouds, branded clouds, running clouds. subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro. I leave for another world, as if, for a coasting voyage. I make a sketch of the land commencing with those parts, which were the least liable to change in appearance. I savour the sway of formulas, the reversal of origins. The ease which brings the anterior coast out of the subsequent coast. All coasts become old once they are repeated, without magic without enthusiasm,

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as if it were natural, as if by some miracle, as if it were adequate, as if to imitate. In order for repetition to be erotic, it must be formal. The stereotype is of an unconstrained coast that claims constancy and is aware of its own insistence. Structural Analysis must recognise the slightest resistances in the coast, the irregular pattern of its veins. I pass my days at the very edge of the sea, my feet, touching the ocean. An undefinable superstition contends me not to lose contact with it. There is only one way left to escape the alienation of the coast, to retreat ahead of it. It is time I described my island to you. I write with the metallic pencil, the marks of which are not liable to be effaced by seawater. I write like a concierge who will be absent for a minute in English and in French, like an educated concierge. I'm on the other island and coming back. At last the sky appears, the whole sky, so pure, so laden with stars Then perhaps the coast returns, not as an illusion, but as fiction.

And I'll leave that there I, I said that it was sort of a work in progress. But it's that portion has been selected as an editor's pick for the Robin Blaser poetry competition run by the capilano review, which is a fantastic journal published here in Canada on the west coast. And they're interested in looking at how we might incorporate the visuals. So it remains a piece very much in flux. And I would, I want to read one other tiny portion from this sprawling project, which, at the very beginning of lockdown, actually that weird week in the UK when we really should have been in lockdown, but we weren't yet and I was feeling a bit freaked out I am I made a zine, was my first response to stress is to make a zine, and I made a zine about using another portion of this text, which is called it's not true, and it's specifically the Suzanne character Castaway on an island.

It's not true that a ship passed within a few miles of the island, and I had nothing ready to make a sign. It's not true, that I wanted to starve then, that I spread my body in the water to die also of drowning, that I left my head out of the sea, to die also, of sunstroke that I thought of all that is basest and lowest in the world to die also of indignity, that I opened all the deaths around me like gas pipes, and waited. It's not true that I used my days to sand my legs, to rub them with a mother of pearl powder that rendered them silver. It's not true that I kissed a platypus. I rummaged through her pockets and found nothing.

So that's my lockdown zine. And I don't know I think it cheered people up, I sent out quite a few in the post. And as Jack mentioned, I'm currently the

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writer in residence at the University of Alberta, which is in Edmonton. The Cree name for Edmonton is Amiskwaskahegan, which means beaver hills house, and there are literally beavers building houses within walking distance from my house, which is really exciting. And I had a very elaborate proposal when I applied for this residency that involved all kinds of location based research and archival based research and obviously threw that right out the window and haven't been in a library in quite a while, a bit twitchy about that. So I started a sort of contextual inquiry in the fabulous wild river valley that runs through the city of, through the centre of this city. And I have very little engagement with the city itself. I'm walking every day in this wild, wonderful place. And writing every day from this, from this engagement with the place in an attempt to acknowledge the place itself and my Instagram feed is basically like a dedicated chickadee feeding feed, there's small birds called chickadees. And this is my practice now I feed chickadees, and and so I've created three zines so far whilst here so this is looking suspiciously like a like a book project. So what I want to do is read three, three of the zines from the sequence and this will be the last work I read today. Very much work in progress, so we shall see. They have titles, but I don't think I'm going to read the titles. I'm just gonna have a sip of water.

People keep trying to tell me, Edmonton is a city. The scale of this place eludes me. Amiskwaskahegan from the Cree for beaver hills house and indeed there are beavers building houses within walking distance from the house I am renting I am visiting I am listening, I am glimpsing, occasional glimpse of glass and steel rising through poplars, a confusion of figure and forest, city and field, a corner garden, a blaze of cosmos, and chrysanthemums, a false sky, a blue tarpaulin bright against the wildfire haze. scrambling down a non path skirting a soft edge squatting, to examine a conglomeration of pebbles suspended in strata of sandstone slide scars over coal seams, shale beds, thrust faults and bands of concretions. Hard solid masses in the local accumulation of matter within sediment. gusting to gale force at a place they call the end of the world. Dust sized shards swirl ellipsoidal fragments of pumice created by the bridge river eruption of the mount meagre massive carried eastward by prevailing winds 2350 years ago or so. Swelling, slicking, Sticking, drying, cracking, crumbling. Some volcanoes never stop erupting. What I'm saying is even this dust is a settler.

a razzle of dogwood, a dazzle of light, a stand of birch, a sky of bright,

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ravens close and numerous, clamorous except when silent. on one thumb, a chickadee perches, pauses, poses with a peanut. increasingly pressing questions from friends in non chickadee nations. How do you? How long? I mean, do you just? considering compiling a field guide, but to what? Walking with ears instead of eyes, standing with hands open, inviting the touch of other creatures. Listen, they find you, then the thrum, breath into lungs, wings into air.

And I'd like to dedicate this this last piece in this series to my friend Sharon Ven who's creating this old woman bear and she's somebody that I have been walking with a lately. walking. I should also say that the word mukluk is a is a indigenous word for boot, a kind of boot. Walking weather hovering between mukluk and Wellington, sweating under one layer too many but basking anyway in Sun warm skin. Listening to moving river ice melting, is this progress? This impending absence, this dripping, this shattering, a woodpecker ratatat cracking, beetle dead, branches, silver with lichen, layers of wet of bark, of wood, of silt, of wing witnessing the wounds where ice came crashing down river, gashing, living spruce, standing, still. noticing the contested boundaries between bark, and not, leaf and rot, marvelling at mud in this dry place, the amount of blue, it takes up space. What is this sky trying to hide? A solar Halo, barely discernible, a hollow at the base of an elm tree, the creaks and groans of two elm trees, leaning, chafing, scraping, growing into one another, the ongoing violence of this long embrace. No one wants to move this slowly. Thank you very much.

1:16:12

Jack Thacker: Welcome back, everyone. It's my privilege now to get to talk to these three poets. After those wonderful readings, and I just want to remind the listeners that if you want to ask any questions to them directly, you can type it into the Google comments, and we'll do our best to get to them. I'm just going to begin, I guess, partly because you're all working on poems at the moment or you all read from recent work. And each of those pieces seem to have been inflected in some way by the current situation we find ourselves in and have found ourselves in now for some time, the way our lives have changed during this pandemic. So I just wondered if we could address that question head on right at the beginning, rather than leave it as the elephant in the room, if you like, and I just wanted to ask how the conditions under which we've lived have changed your practice? Have you been writing more, writing

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less, writing differently? And has it changed your relationship with poetry, or research or criticism, any of those ways or other art forms? So J.R, we just heard from you and you very much framed that piece as a kind of lockdown poem in some form. I wonder if you wanted to start us off?

1:17:41

J.R. Carpenter: Yeah, sure, that, especially those last three pieces come from, as I said, I do usually work a lot with archives and archival material and this sort of thing. And I threw all that right out the window. And I was like, right, how to stay sane. You know how to stay sane, on for this nine month residency in a city where I know no one, where we can't go outside and where it gets very, very, very, very, very, very cold in the winter. And early on in my time here, I did a workshop online with Marilyn Arsem, who is an American performance, performance artist into these really long durational pieces, like she'll do six hour performances and stuff. And we did an exercise where we had to come up with an action and do that action every day, for 10 days. And so I had a writing prompt for myself where I had to, because I've been walking on the river, and I've been bringing home massive amounts of stones. And I was like, Okay, one stone, you're only allowed one stone every day. And you have to write why this stone. And so I started getting into this daily writing exercise that was a bit about reporting back to myself, you know, like trying to try to check in with myself and building on that I developed a collaboration with Christine Stewart, who's, who teaches here at the University of Alberta, and who's a poet. And, and so we set up a writing prompt for ourselves where, you know, basically, we just had to go outside every day and report back, it didn't even need to be poetry. And we set up a Google Doc. So all the writing in the in those last three pieces are the bits and pieces from these daily activities, then I've been sort of taking lots of pictures and starting to formulate the writing through Instagram captions, and posting on Twitter and you know, bringing into a Google doc and then bringing into some kind of forum. So it's, I mean, which is a way I have not worked before and it's not a million miles away from ways I thought in work before, but I thought that I felt that the pandemic really required a kind of discipline, especially around going outside.

1:20:15

Jack Thacker: So, trying to walk every day. It's it's important, isn't it? Vicky you, you also read a pandemic poem, if I can call it that. I wondered if you want to

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share your thoughts?

1:20:27

Vicky Sparrow: Yeah, thanks. Yeah. Yeah, that the point about discipline is interesting, I think, yeah, I think we've all had to kind of discipline our lives in slightly different ways. But yeah, I always kind of feel aware of myself as a very undisciplined writer, and I just write quite kind of randomly. So actually, that hasn't really, that hasn't been easily changed the way that I've, the way that I've kind of done the writing process. But I mean, I suppose the thing is that the material conditions within which any work is produced, always kind of shape the work in some way, to some degree. And I think, in a fairly superficial way, I've in my more recent poems have had, you know, masks and gloves and hand sanitizer, the kind of objects of the pandemic that we've had to kind of, we've had to kind of arrange ourselves around or incorporate into our lives in some way, those have had to be in some way incorporated into the poem. And I think, I think it will be interesting to see the kind of the kind of work that comes out of kind of the, the pandemic as pandemic writing, and to think about how the way that the, the forms of different poems are able to incorporate that kind of external material, to, to sort of, I don't know signal or, or index a kind of relationship between poetry and process, and, and, and external kind of material conditions. I think it will be Yeah, interesting to trace to trace that, and I imagine it will be about kind of matter and objects, but also perhaps, about the way in which kind of constraint or inhibition might might affect the form the, the kind of the embodiment of the poem, almost as a as a kind of index of the embodiment of the of the poet in some way. And I suppose that also brings up kind of implicit questions about how poems re order or reorganise the material of experience, and how that how that functions and kind of, you know, what, what does the poem do with this stuff? And how does it represent it? And what is the point of doing it? What's the kind of what's the action of that reordering? How does it work? So, yeah, I think, I think there will be lots of interesting kind of connections to be traced through the, through the different work that's produced in the pandemic. I mean, for my own work, I suppose at the moment, I'm not sure I just am aware of all this stuff that's intruded into the material. But it might Yeah, it might take me a bit more time to kind of process what that process is. But also, I suppose that there will be an unevenness to how, you know, to how the pandemic gets represented and process through through poetry, of course, because you know, the material experiences of the pandemic have been so uneven as well.

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1:23:46

Jack Thacker: Thanks. Yeah. I love the idea that not only the content, but the form of these poems will be irrevocably changed. And it's going to be really interesting to compare pre pandemic and post pandemic poetic form. Rowan, can I turn to you and I wonder if your poems of mediaeval monasticism if you found any residence is there or if it's affected your, your interests in other ways?

1:24:14

Rowan Evans: Yeah, it's funny because sort of at the beginning of the first lockdown, I was getting really frustrated kind of sick of people referencing anchorites and mediaeval monks, like it's suddenly like blasted into the popular culture in a way that's like, no, that's, that's my lease thing. And now it's like, you know, articles and magazines saying, Oh, we should turn to the mediaeval anchoress to to learn how to deal with this new situation. So that was kind of funny and interesting. But also, you know, I really empathise with what J.R. was saying about access to spaces and to libraries and to archives, because most of my creative work over the past few years has been tied up in practice based research as part of my PhD. So really the critical and creative have been alongside one another. And like J.R. I had planned for last year a lot of travels. So I was supposed to be travelling to the north of England to Lindisfarne, holy island to do some work there. And I had plans to even get up to Shetland because I wanted to do some stuff. And that all very quickly sort of became quite drastically reduced. And I also also make a lot of work collaboratively so with my performance company. And working in theatre as well. And the theatre industry in particular, has been, you know, has really suffered in the, you know, the inability to be with other people and other bodies in a space which is, you know, so basic to, to collaboration. So there were really periods in between lockdowns where we were kind of snatching the time that we had to meet outside and to work together. And, but I also really liked what Vicky was saying about form, because I so I, when I sort of realised that I wasn't going to be able to go up to the northeast and do these, you know, place based field work type investigations, I started writing these like, very, very fast, quite angry posts. I didn't read any this evening, actually, because they're quite new and they haven't quite settled yet. But they're kind of on the surface, though. They're sort of about a couple of figures from Irish mythology, Sweeney, the Mad bird King, and another favourite called Goban,

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who's sort of primaevial builder who builds hermitages. And they're weird poems, like they, they develop this form, which came quite directly from this feeling of frustration and an acceleration where they started out as blocks of prose. And then the final line is incredibly kind of perversely long. So they kind of look like a wedge with a line. And it wasn't intentional, that was just kind of the way that the prose fell out. And then I ended up using that, replicating that form. And there's no punctuation in the poems and they're kind of like rarr, so yeah, it's really just and those poems also are full of the immediate detritus of what was around me. And I suppose, being a lot more restricted, has meant that I've been thinking a lot more closely about this idea of a transhistorical transhistoricity. I suppose by that, I mean, sometimes there's a tendency, sometimes when in working, particularly with early mediaeval texts to sort of locate them in a sort of misty other place, or wilderness space, you know, you travel to the hill or to the island or to the burrow. And I love and make a lot of that sort of work as well. But there was kind of a nice counteraction to that was happening in my inability to, you know, travel to the stereotypical spaces of mediaeval encounter. And thinking, Well, what happens when I'm when I'm writing through an Irish text for an old English texts, and I'm basically just going around my local park, or like, dodging, I remember dodging bubbles from a bubble gun from from a nearby garden, because there was this fear early on that any sort of anything that carried a vapour like cigarette smoke, or vaping, or bubbles that someone had blown into, could be carrying the virus like a sort of air bomb. So there's all these strange little weird temporalities and things which were jarring in a very interesting way in a very productive way with some of the the mediaeval poetry that I was working with. So that's been interesting. But yeah, I do think we are lucky as writers to be able to, to write and to not necessarily have to use other resources to feed our practice, although often our practice is located in an external work as well, but yeah, I do feel lucky in that, I at least have a desk and a computer at home. Yeah. Good question.

1:29:06

Jack Thacker: Thanks. Yeah, local parks have been doing a lot of heavy lifting, haven't they? For poets, as well as everyone else? I can certainly testify to that. We've actually had a question from scree magazine come through. It's a question for Vicky. But I think really, it applies to everyone here. And they're intrigued by how you wove in quotations by thinkers in your poem. What do you think of the poem as a site for critical thinking? can poems do things that

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essays don't do? And I guess that's very relevant to this whole five bodies programme? So perhaps we'll start with Vicky on that one. And then I think it'd be really great to hear from Rowan and J.R. as well.

1:29:49

Vicky Sparrow: Yeah, sure. Great. Thank you so much for that question. It's a it's a really difficult question. I mean, yeah, so yeah, what do you think of the poem as a site for critical thinking that I mean, that's something that I do think about. But I'm not sure I completely come to a firm conclusion on it to be honest. So can poems do things that essays don't do? I think, actually, yes. I probably do have a clearer answer for that one. So yeah, absolutely. I mean, I do, weave kind of various kind of points of intertextuality and different quotations and into my work. And partly, it's to kind of recontextualize things that I've read, or ideas that I've come across, and to kind of have a look at what they do in the poem. And to almost be able to kind of take them and turn them around and try and work out what other angles or perspectives there might be in them when that are kind of opened out through their recontextualization. But I also hope to because there's a slight danger in that if you end up kind of misrepresenting an idea, by by decontextualizing it. So I also try and retain a kind of sense of otherness, in the poem, through that kind of imported or incorporated material, and keep some of that kind of resistance there. And that, and again, that I think opens out a way of kind of thinking about that material, without smoothing over too much. But being able to see it from a different angle that isn't kind of completely homogenised into into a different experience. But I do think that when you experience those kinds of intertextual quotations, or ideas, through an aesthetic experience, it kind of does something different to when you might experience it through a kind of through the essay form or within an academic argument. Whether or not the poem can do critical thinking it Yeah, that's, that's a great question. I think it can, but it's critical in a different way. I mean, I think all poetry and all kind of form has a kind of criticality to it. Because it it might resist or come up against ordinary patterns of thinking or our ordinary kind of modes of using habitual modes of using language. And so in that reorganisation, it turns us into, into kind of thinkers who have to think differently. And in that sense, I think critical work can absolutely be done. But I think it's done in a slightly different way. And I think aesthetics is, is somehow integral to that. I suppose I think of it spatially as a kind of opening out or a kind of hinging, I often think of the line break as a kind of hinge, by which it kind of opens and closes

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simultaneously. And that does something that perhaps, maybe it's unfair to say this, but maybe the the kind of more linear academic argument perhaps is a little bit more closed in that sense. Yeah, I hope that answered the question in some way.

1:33:21

Jack Thacker: That was fantastic. I just wondered if J.R. or Rowan had anything to add to that?

1:33:27

J.R. Carpenter: Um, yeah, I certainly would happily jump in. It's a great set of questions. And and I'm, I think, the more I work on it, the less clear I am about the difference between an essay and a poem. And the so An Ocean of static was Appendix C of my PhD thesis, like, I don't know, and there's a long, long, long piece in here called notes very necessary that started off as a essay, was commissioned as an essay, but a digital essay, written in collaboration, and, you know, became a script for live performance and eventually became what you know, penned in the margins calls poetry, I guess. So I, I'm kind of constantly moving through these forms. And I think a better example is that is the this, the gathering cloud, which again, started as a digital piece. And actually, it started as a performance. I was on a performance tour, the Southwest poetry tour and we were making pieces in collaboration and I was working with another poet and we were going to do something on clouds and she proposed writing in the hendecasyllabic. And I like, googled hendecasyllabic, oh sure you know, it's only five minutes, and then I wound up making this I was commissioned to do a digital piece. And I wound up making the whole digital piece in hendecasyllabic and then started writing this book, which is sort of an extended essay. I mean, I was gonna write a conference paper about the work anyway. And I started. And I just realised No, I have to do the whole thing, the whole thing in hendecasyllabic, but I don't think it's a poem. I think it's an essay in Hendecasyllabic. And it's mostly the even the essay is mostly found writing. So there's that really interesting question about citation and quotation. And, to me, the way that it's critical is that it's a very, very, very, very close reading, to be reading critical theory, you know, counting syllables all through, all through all through and so, I think that the, the text presented in this in this hendecasyllabic way, you know, like, it looks like poetry, but it's really an essay, it has a kind of criticality to it, that a, quote, regular essay might not have, you know, kind of like Vicky saying about

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the linebreaks, because it's, it's this, this intense focus of the reading of the material that I'm citing, and I and I would add that in the pleasure of the coast, when I was making the digital piece again, you know, I'm working with texts, that's not poetry, and then it sort of winds up looking like poetry, although the full title of the piece is the pleasure of the coast, a hydro graphic novel, and, but I'm working with English and French simultaneously, which again, requires this immensely close reading where I'm, you know, I'm taking text from philosophy in the English and French and going damn, these aren't the same. And, you know, getting into, and what happens when you're mixing a scientific text, a philosophical text and a novel. I mean, I like poetry seems to be the only thing that can possibly hold all that stuff together. That's where I'm at right now.

1:37:15

Jack Thacker: Thank you. Yeah, that's that's beautiful. Rowan, I mean, you're, you're doing a practice based PhD currently. And I'm sure you've got plenty to say on, on the relationship between sort of poetry and criticism.

1:37:27

Rowan Evans: Yeah, I think I think lots of things that Vicky and J.R. just said, Yeah, things that I would agree with and have felt would apply to my own work as well. I think, yeah, I'm particularly interested in work, which sits somewhere between genres between between ways of thinking and I also think, translation as well is often a a critical activity in terms of a very close relationship to a work or to a an author who may be anonymous as well. And I also, I also really like what Vicky was saying about how, I suppose I think about particularly lyric writing, it can have a formal logic to it, which which causes an adjustment or a hinging, perhaps, in the mind, which, which sheds light on things in a slightly different way, or allows us to step to the side of or parallel to something that we think we might be addressing. I think my favourite sort of work is when, when the concerns in a poem might begin to reveal themselves at a tangent or something that you didn't expect necessarily to be the main main cause of argument sort of reveals itself. And there can be a clustering as well, that can happen, you know, through the different things in form, whether it's repetition or certain phrases, or it's almost a bit like improvising or riffing around a certain fragment or an idea, which, again, shows us different sides to it. I suppose, as a parting thought on that, I think another thing that I've become increasingly more interested in

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is the different political or political or ethical expectations we have of poets, researchers, critical thinkers, and the sorts of argument particularly political argument that might be made in a poem and how, to what extent we hold the author of that, that poem, that thought, that idea, hold them to account in the same way that we would perhaps someone writing an academic essay as themselves or a polemic in a newspaper. In my own work, this is this is become particularly relevant in terms of unpacking ideas around nationalism and fascism as well. And also modernist poetry is in general have quite an uneasy relationship with certain Yeah, quite fascist ideologies or patterns of political thinking, which can be quite dangerous when taken outside of the sphere of poetry or perhaps still dangerous as poems. So I think that idea of critical rigour but also attention to the different context within which which a word or quotation is working. Is Yeah, interesting and important. Yeah.

1:40:13

Jack Thacker: Thank you. They're such fascinating answers to that question. Thank you for the question. There's another one here. This one's pitched for J.R. But I think I'm gonna sort of riff on the question afterwards and put a similar question to Rowan, and Vicky as well, and it's from Ela lease. And she says about zines, and their relation to the final works? Are they "finished equals polished" fragments of a larger whole, initial sketches that are later elaborated, condensations? Or? So I guess, yeah, zines.

1:40:53

J.R. Carpenter: Thanks for that question. And I'm already looking forward to hearing Rowan on this too. And I think we've both worked in the chapbook form as well. But for me, the zine is as almost like a prototype. So So I come from a fine art background, originally. And you know, I am my name is carpenter, I mean, I'm sort of predisposed to make things. And I, you know, writing happens in this weird space, and, you know, what, what, what's even on the page and on the screen, it remains a bit amorphous until it becomes a thing with pages, so right, and then, you know, so that so for me, it's a early first step in testing, but also sharing, you know, I want to it's a it's like a micro publishing in the sense of making public and sharing and so I do a lot of zine exchange, you know, through the post. And in Montreal, there was a guy named Louis Rastelli who collected old cigarette machines and repurpose them to sell art for \$2. dollar coin, sell zines. So this kind of idea of portions of the writing immediately becoming activated, and, and getting outside me

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out into some kind of sense of community or exchange, gift exchange, people sending things to me. And so, uh, so they're not exactly finished, I have a really, really, really terrible guillotine here. So anybody who's received a zine from me in the post knows they're, they're just utter crap, the way they're put together, but it's the, it's that's not the point. And I can tell you that for, Yeah, I think all of my published books have started with zine. So the gathering cloud also started with the zine, you know, at this one's a more of a matte fold and an ocean of static has within it, I don't know three or four zines. And so um, you know, the the gathering cloud became a book because I sent this in the post to Colin Zakat who the who's like, yeah, we should talk about making a book. So there, there are also these sort of transitional objects that are way often the text starts in some amorphous digital space as well. And so it becomes a way to have a an exchange, it's really about the exchange, rather than the text itself, or rather than the text being finished. It's like this this moment and this event. And I think, I think we need that I think we need that space in between. Yeah. Yeah. Thanks for that.

1:43:51

Jack Thacker: Great, Yeah, that's a really good question. I just wondered if Vicky or Rowan had anything to add to that. I guess, one of the things that I'm interested in riffing on that is the relationship between the individual poem and the project, if you like, you know, or the sequence, you know, you both read sort of shorter pieces and shorter pieces that were part of longer pieces. So perhaps you can speak to that in this context as well.

1:44:17

Rowan Evans: Just sort of jumping on what J.R. was saying, as well, I think, certainly, I would agree that the idea of the zine or the chapbook or the pamphlet that you know, these different vocabularies for different forms of smaller publishing, so tied up in different communities and practices of reading and sharing work. And it's interesting, sort of as you navigate those different communities as you develop, you know, develop what you might call a career in writing or looking back over, you know, a period of years and how different texts have kind of served different relationships or networks, to what extent you know, a smaller publication is like, more become part of a collection. And to what extent when we're when we're working on something whether we're envisaging an individual work as, something in its own right, something that might sit alongside other sequences, something which

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might take up its own space for iteration of smaller publications. So I yeah, I suppose there isn't, you know, a straight answer, but but you know, like, like J.R., there's so that the rune thing I read exists as these kind of set of cards, which, where I'm in person I normally lay out on the floor and do this kind of charm space performance with, but that's also existed as a short sequence in a magazine, and may at some point be part of a collection or a larger sequence of work, written within the context of a creative critical academic PhD thesis. So yeah, I think the nice thing about zines or small publications is they often give formal space or do things which may or may not be kind of permitted in the space of a more traditional publication. So I don't know where I've put it now, but then, in the last verses of Beccan as well, you know, there's pages that just have a big bit of punctuation in the middle. And, you know, when you're dealing in a beautifully made chapbook from Guillemot press, you know, it's wonderful, you can do that. But then when you start doing that in different contexts, it doesn't necessarily have the same texture to it, or might lose something of its material meaning. Yeah, really interesting question.

1:46:34

Jack Thacker: Thanks. I wondered if you had anything to add, Vicky?

1:46:37

Vicky Sparrow: Um, I think mainly, just to echo those thoughts that that yeah, I think the, the zine or the, the pamphlet is a really useful and it's just a great form it to, I think, for me, it somehow enables a form that is more molten or kind of still in process and liquid to go out into the world, particularly if it's, if it's a kind of, you know, self made zine. And also the, the importance of, of, yeah, community and kind of circulation within a community of readers and writers. And the kind of, I guess, solidarity, particularly, you know, at times like these, that can come from that kind of sharing practice. So, yeah, I think I love the way J.R.'s, you know, guillotining out little, little mini zines. Yeah, it's brilliant. Yes. And you asked about sequences? I yeah. I think partly, I see, you see the fact that I tend to write in sequences as a slight failing as a poet, because I feel like, I try and write a poem, and it just keeps spilling out, or kind of, I'm using lots of liquid metaphors for this. But it's sort of, yeah, it kind of just keeps going. And I don't seem to be able to hold hold the thing that I'm trying to think about down into one, one contained poem. So I find the sequence really useful for that. And also, because it's durational. For me, I

find there's more opportunity and flexibility to use repetition and to use kind of formal devices across pages and across the kind of temporal experience, which, which I think, makes it richer for me, it helps me to Yeah, I suppose just do do a greater variety of kind of different echoes and different repeated modes. And I think that's maybe going back to the previous question. That's, that's And do

one of the the iterations, the kind of iterative modes of thinking that you can do in a sequence or a poem that perhaps is more difficult to do in some other forms.

1:48:53

Jack Thacker: Thanks. We just got a couple of minutes left. And I really wanted to ask each of you about sound, listening, music, rhythm, it was such a key part of all of these readings, whether that sound was played digitally or done by a tapping on the pencil or whether it was just the voice itself. So I wondered if you could each, maybe spend just 30 seconds because we're really running out of time just to say something on sound and the importance of that in performance and writing. And Shall we have Rowan go first?

1:49:32

Rowan Evans: Sure, gosh, 30 seconds. Yeah, so obviously, I work also as a composer and sound artist and very interested in interdisciplinarity in my own work and the work that I wrote about as well. And I suppose, maybe, other than using recording and produce sound in performance, the the main way that sound exists in my work is as a very bodily medium for translation, and particularly as a way of beginning to work with texts that we don't fully understand. So I love working with, particularly early mediaeval languages that I, I can't fully read properly, hence why I ended up gravitating to hold Irish and in beccan, so I think, yes, sounding and articulating things with the mouth and feeling in the body can often be a very immediate way of creating a relationship or encounter with with another or another text or another person. Yeah.

1:50:30

Jack Thacker: Well, thanks. And Vicky?

1:50:33

Vicky Sparrow: Yeah, thanks. Yeah. Another big and complicated, really

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interesting question. Excuse me. I think for me, part of the the use of sound in poetry is about maybe creating different kinds of textures of listening, different ways of listening, different attitudes for people to engage with listening. And also not listening. I'm kind of believer in zoning out of poetry and not listening to it and just feeling it as a as a thing that that is physical in in the world. And not not necessarily semantic, but it's something that you might be able to listen to, if you, you know, don't have a two hour long attention span, but you might be able to feel and kind of receive some mode of communication through another way. So yeah, to me, I think sound and rhythm kind of opens out modes of listening into things that might include different listening, non listening, ambivalent listening. And that makes it I think, a richer and kind of more inclusive way of performing and sharing.

1:51:41

Jack Thacker: Yeah, thanks. Something like Robert Frost's sound of sense, I think. And finally, J.R.

1:51:48

J.R. Carpenter: And yet a very, very briefly, although I'd love to talk about it more, I'd say two things. Firstly, when I arrived here, the University asked me to do a welcoming reading, like an open opening my residency with a reading and with the outgoing writer in residence, who happens to be local to Edmonton, Darren Hagen. And I was like, Oh, God, not another zoom reading. And, and could give me that guy's phone number, can we talk and I and we met up, and he happens to have a lot of experience in music and theatre. And I was like, let's make something and we made an audio piece together, mostly around this river valley. And it was really early on. And actually that that line, people keep trying to tell me Edmonton is a city is the first line of that audio piece. And it was just, it was so exciting and refreshing to arrive in a new place under such restrictions and to have contact with this one person who was, you know, we, we did it all on our phones, we wrote the text as a WhatsApp exchange. But we went out and recorded audio. And it was, it was a really wonderful way to encounter the place and to work in a different medium and to work in collaboration. And the final brief thing I would say is that, that way of working, starting off this time here, led to me to be already thinking about sound throughout the whole time. And so, in this walking that I've been doing, I've been listening, and I've been listening, like a visitor, like What's that? You know, and the birds are different

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here than the English birds that I've lived with for 12 years. So who's the Who's that and trying to get to know the chickadees has been a lot about listening for them. Where are they and, and, you know, so than I ever have. So thanks for that question. It's very good question.

1:53:59

Jack Thacker: Thank you for those answers. You can see that the dark has descended to my attic room. So we're going to have to wrap it up there, two hours on poetry sounds quite daunting on paper, but I could have sat here for longer and asked you many more questions and listened to you longer. So thank you, all three of you. It's been really pleasurable and eye opening and ear opening. And thank you all for listening wherever you are, it's it's been a pleasure for us we hope it's been a pleasure for you. And do join us next with more five bodies poets. Thank you

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