

Thu 1 Jul
7-8.30pm

Raymond Antrobus,
Bhanu Kapil, Nat Raha

Transcript

SPEAKERS

Zayneb Allak, Raymond Antrobus, Nat Raha

Zayneb Allak 00:00:03

This event is part of the 2021 Critical Poetics International Summer School. The Critical Poetics Research Group is based at Nottingham Trent University and provides a platform for exploring the role of creative and critical writing in promoting cross-cultural conversation and driving social change. My name's Zayneb Allak and I'm a writer and lecturer in creative writing. I was also the first research associate on the Critical Poetics Project when we set it up in 2017. So, I'm delighted to be able to host this event and to see how far the project has come. This year, the Critical Poetics Summer School investigates the theme of care in all its contexts. How has the global pandemic changed care? What does care now mean in light of the social injustices and inequalities foregrounded by Black Lives Matter? What does it mean to be charged with the care of animal, vegetal and mineral lifeforms during the sixth mass extinction and the care of the environment in the ongoing climate crisis? Furthermore, how has care, both as a concept and an experience changed for writers, artists, critics and readers? Organised by the Critical Poetics Research Group at Nottingham Trent University in partnership with Nottingham Contemporary, Curated and Created at NTU, and Metronome, the 2021 Summer School consists of public events designed to interrogate the degree to which writing, art, criticism or a combination of these, can help us attend to manifold, interconnected, and collective care responsibilities. This evening, we're delighted to hear from poets Nat Raha, Bhanu Kapil and Raymond Antrobus for this special event on troubling care. Each poet will read for about 15 minutes, after which we'll return with Nat and Raymond for a discussion of their work. It's now my great pleasure to introduce tonight's readers. Nat Raha is a poet and activist scholar based in Edinburgh. She's the author of three collections and numerous pamphlets of poetry, including «Of Sirens, Body and Fault Lines,» published by Boiler House Press in 2018,

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«Counter Sonnets,» published by Contraband Books from 2013, «Octet» from Veer books in 2010, and «Four Dreams» published by the Earthbound Poetry Series in 2020. Her creative and critical writing has appeared in South Atlantic Quarterly, Third Text Poetry Review, Matte Magazine, The New Feminist Literary Studies, and in the 2020 anthology «On Care». Her writing has been translated into French, Galician, German, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Slovenian. Nat co-edits Radical Transfeminism zine. Raymond Antrobus was born in London to an English mother and Jamaican father. He's the author of «The perseverance», «To Sweeten Bitter», and the children's picture book, «Can bears ski?» illustrated by Polly Dunbar. In 2019, he was a recipient of the Ted Hughes Awards and won the Sunday Times University of Warwick Young Writer Of The Year Awards and became the first poet to be awarded the Rathbones Folio Prize. His next poetry collection, «All the names given,» is published in September by Picador and 10 House. Winner of the T.S Eliot Prize in 2020, Bhanu Kapil is the author of six full length collections. And most recently, «How to wash a heart,» published by Pavilion Poetry and «Incubation: A space for monsters», published by Kelsey Street Press, forthcoming in a new edition with essays on performance and shame and a preface by Eunsong Kim. So over now to our readers.

Nat Raha 00:04:06

Hi everyone. Thanks for tuning in. I'm going to start by reading a short poem that I was working on it at the start of the pandemic. Just kind of thinking through some things and I think I read it in one of the very first kind of online readings that were happening at that time. (Nat clears throat) Prevail joy in the face of this noise cut dissolving ground dehydrated, where we lay feeling's cope. Tearing from future days depth circulate and draw nerves arterial out to tongue's bloom, simmers join and means deploy, striped to triangular. Vulnerability steps remember the means we came to be, rest flush in multitude, spines on text and paper, passion isolate the ease with which we freeze crowned to cower and eyes sprint, deject energetics rumination flies it's in the data grasps about us icing ankles. Nest on the needs sensations skin to shimmer, they leave you with so little methods left to speak and part, circulate means base curb tendrils, the amplitude de-patterned: refract the speed in which you are, in generate light, bare what and how we lose each other, un-stitch the scope of where you're fixed. (papers rustling) I'm going to read from two things for the rest of the reading. I'm going to start by reading this long poem that came out in Map Magazine back in March. It's called, «Blubber

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guts, southern Leith» It's on the history of industrial wailing in the 20th Century. And in particular, Adam Burr's connections to it, particularly the neighbourhood of Leith which is a port that kind of got subsumed into Edinburgh around this period as well, which is where I'm currently stood. My block is the block where all of the business based here was housed, was situated, well, I should say housed. Where they had their headquarters. The poem has a description of the hunt of a whale and the skinning of a whale, which is in section five. So, it's not the most pleasant reading but I will present listening but I will number the sections so you know where it's coming if you want to mute. Blubber guts, Southern Leith one and two. Icebreaker, hold still a touch shred the opportune from possibility life its reflexes of the fear and upheaval known, lived, passed through, speared, incarcerated, disrupted ecological ruin sown in land grabs and steam, cast violent lines out from Europe, the reordering of sea, land, life, ground bitten and frost, horse, permeated the Atlantic in wakes and foes, directions to foment colony with durable hands, ships forged on these northern shores lay the ropes of the world in your desire to control profit on hunt, bid lines war faring, raw material to sake market, all cetaceans game, in the simplicity happening to be there mind's eye fed resolution and adventure to stumble survey your wilderness of water, ice to seek wealth and oil, heat and food knowing your insatiable islands every last seem as possible industry to carve dominance. Three. Ultramarine driven polarities to align compelled from vertigo light cut in scope of your buoyancy, forged in thousands' wet eclipse, refrain submerged, rich on the volume of body, blue and humpback to black depth motions blessed to krill and on the memory of vast kin the century each of you might span, air in the thrive and for water to be known as south Atlantic/Antarctic perimeter heartland to impose human roving and harpoons and trades, noise marked by royal standards for the industrial frontiers of Europe in pursuit of new flesh having dredged the lives from your nearest waters turned other for salve/sen to drive extinction, fore/shadow temperate edges dulled, the permanent day worked on as ecology touched only into itself, prefabricate an industrial harbour corrugated iron and asbestos, and minimise, later, a pelagic factory to float without regulation. Four. Repeating resonant flesh call inchoate hydrophonia low hertz frequency blues stereotyped two lulls migration bellow's, waves crepuscular babble in miles of hundreds and carries submerge Atlanticity know and tune ears wage Repeating resonant and noise we tune into you and sunk mechanical frequencies churned carbon and life dispossessed, diesel and sonar, nuclear and other missiles, blown amplitude as modernandcut edgesandcombust. Logistical trade noise andice cuts

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known as commodity and debt frequencies to vibrate oceans heat, channel/
direct the melt. Five. Low price works the antarctic density harp bold over
waterandcoiling firesandhoists to flag the dead a career body, steam blue
spots fin and wrong sinks rapidly barrel on ties trajectory, eye full ahead spring
loaded innovative line even the catcher would recoil by the gun shoots in the
footage cries when you axe it's life, becoming unit, becoming catch tugged
and hauled to the flensing plan or bow, peels back skin and blubber and would
first would leave the rest of you out to float later, cutters worked out guts,
warmed his hands on your blood, took the rest of the steam saw in the Fordist
heat, extracted stored your oils, boiled down, coagulated churned to hard fat,
taken to market to face hungry bodies mouth burners stoves, guns accounts.
Six. Laying out the scope: Named after the port that has its parent company
between 1909-1963, South Leigh has the largest fishery to have ever existed
in the world. Run by Salvesen's on the island of South Georgia, it was two
oceans from the continent where its produce, alongside the wealth that came
from extracting so much life from the ocean, was destined. By 1914, 4500
humpback whales hunted producing 8000 tonnes of oil a year. 1925, 8,000
whales, blue, fin, humpback, southern right killed in a year, for £300,000 profits
which is about £100 million today. Whale oil produced from blubber was used
in cooking, in margarine and later in nitro-glycerine for explosives, primarily for
European markets. 1931, 42,000 whales killed in a year by pelagic whaling.
Over the 1930s, Salvesen's made 1.1 million from whaling which is about 365
million today. Taxes on the industry funded UK research into whale biology, to
provide a basis for industrial sustainability in a context where its work force
understood to be unsustainable. In over 50 years, this industry pulled 1.6
million cetaceans, including 300,000 blue whales and 700,000 fin whales from
southern oceans. And current blue whale population estimates around 25,000
worldwide. These numbers describe the mass slaughter of and extraction of
wealth towards Scotland and the UK from the world's largest mammals. It is
one link among many that begins with a land grab by the British Crown and
ends in near ecocide to bottle and barrel the dwellers of the bottom of oceans.
While creating work for urban and island communities in Scotland, its colossal
extractions of wealth primarily benefited the capitalist class. Seven. Given
today, how water as animate turbulence cuts southern exposed shores,
mountains, worlds, where drinking water dries, historically marked by colonial
extractions and that today, these Atlantic swim with memory living also in
human workers, industrial pillage, it's afterlife moving as accumulated capital
and that in the desire of nations to control oceans, pour frequencies and

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detonations, to service the next war, disrupt planetary needs we need to trust
rush dives up to beech whales the stress of military occupation. In reply to
decades, silence, neutrality, reluctance to turn wealth into a means to heal to
cede control, what reparative relation could be forged from here to oceanic life.
Melodies absorbed by water I lay at sands, weave by your calls' mourning,
may the war games freeze by the ice they washed from earth may empires
rust. Okay. So, the second half of my reading, I'm going to read two sets from
this ongoing sequence called, «Apparitions on nine by nine.» It's a sequence of
Niners, which is this form coined by the poet Mendoza and adopted by a
bunch of other contemporary poets, which is primarily a nine-line poem with
kind of like nine syllables in each line. And we've been talking a little bit about
how it's kind of a perverse form with constraint and constraint, things kind
of emerge. Yeah. And I've been working on it for about four years. I started
writing it in at the end of 2017 when an artist collective I was a part of were
being violently attacked by the Right-Wing Press in Britain. I think it's kind of
developed quite a lot since then and it's kind of like trying to absorb some of
the grief of Sean Bonnie's death in 2019. Abandoned on love we queers left
our own, she ells decades so nostalgic out diminished vibe, bright into and out
of tour bear an equal dist thresh held skin, enlightened memories, split and
wired dejected, wait, phrase and delve out of what prescriptions vacuum split,
polyphonic alternative from these needs resolute our alien mew sick reversing
[Inaudible] is clocks group us now an easy fiction, emergent dizzying, dusk
shards hanging on us, animate lives of the present these decades old violence
for board stars and black salt, she said the posset builds diminished or to
administered names, heart and solstice I'd fall into the wage day turbulent
shimmer out of discourse, traded clothes, pinned, ordinary trappings, inverse
to squat, dislocate, dasima Anne maid and horny or shave and flesh and locks
dined on black beans, corn and sugar, vagabonds, tinkers, tricksters and
jailbirds had demanded our bodies, fascist rags codes and divisions
systematic flash and capital, nostalgia imposed in gender irritative nations soil
This poem is written after a song by the artist Kindness in softness as weapon
casting logics callous from us, arms as sea, sensation, spun, unbind as refusal,
slow expanse of days, sequence re-tuned keep near your pestle tone step
sites of heart on keys you grant yourself femme, vox, affections un-fill shear of
these days or fact will be thrown scold Nebula between the livid and liminal
compress sculpt and sketch your tendons, what gives energetics to these in
living accumula popular asset and fictions and making the scope of labels,
lines way with salt on no keys so how about that flaming global order

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conjugation of our revolting looks miles and passions your horror that we could bloom scripting lashes in digital from your genes and pure B light collectivise a means to body, urgency, scored to futures, revoking your vocabulary and girl who are you to abandon the beautiful jettison ways of being passed on edge, on song, speeds, face divine tuned, luxurious the earliest known sensations that dawn woven silk learning your rhythm from canvas, lubrication for your flesh of all taken from bodies our remaining hunger and with at your price tags on sustenance, delay parents, imaginary chains of power, purchase or be called to abolish, we're reassembled our affections and solidarities our cracked aforescent hands we, the invisible streets string with feathers, our solitude and negative reveries, vibrant squatting schools and rulings your nights rip by fire disinvest at the deep end particular of flashes, our memory embodied itching where on the union Jack, your truths will be rerouted. Sure with your meagre hooded fragment of earth, gold, store your germs and spoils defended from the right to roam the de-clayed and undead we declare and sent you a raise buckled in such violent torn and shredded viral logic it's impossible defence hands shut at the perimeter, more dependent cages unwritten stretch verbs revised, bonded, victors, capital, et cetera fly off acts as evaporate currency, stone know this hand your devious logic's new occupation of words sentiment bad grammar of bodies, tangential trained manoeuvred they that would revoke this flesh and fear of fictions breath what is given the flow structured to materialise with love and capital in life that your image speaks so sparse, coarse and hollow cognitions over determined, exchange value brand appropriate as all the exit shot reverse the town hall, each riot van engine removed shall see new marine ecology sensing vessels, history, bitter, buried sounds ride it up the walk seem before tarmac babe hold frequencies to be removed from the air on the stand list your horrors, proclamations and divestments pour blood from the crown and ideo you're archaic printed mergers buttoned civic lies to this day against the name of your inflictions, your rubble and basic hatred, 10 hands to gather stolen lives and back bodies schema dye vesting black and brown breath burn up and did nest synthetic pale on prey, screech bitter salvation prized, light disdain, colt benevolent near lip tears on our cellular carbon based, carbon torn stones and plaster time contained to fail continues its ordinary systemic dan growth breath char coal, golden sick on contiguous memories of your violence embedded smoke screened accumulation on crisis horror, iridescent throne, earth and cuts to claim, to clear flow flagged blood pure decay, remove how the earth is walked. All riches, all fruits, all cotton that was worked All riches, all fruits, all

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cotton that was worked the narrow administration, your cashflow worlds, they deem not work, stories under deprivation they deem not work, stories under deck privation downward bracket closed rip the crux of our instruments rock bodies, driving urgent project protest luna arch logics callus from us we the invisible flag pour blood from the crown and idea of coal benevolent of words sensing vessel's history, bear an equal dist, sensei the vessel's history, bear an equal dist, thresh, divine, tuned, luxurious they deem not work vaulting looks miles and passions course and hollow cognition - thanks.

Raymond Antrobus 00:26:01

Alright. Hello. I'm going to begin. I'm going to read some poems between two books, «The perseverance,» and, «All the names given.» And I think I'm going to begin with where the beginning of, «The perseverance,» first book opens with this idea of who gets to access higher ideas, who gets to access the divine. And it's an idea which came out of visiting Gaudi's Cathedral in Barcelona just after my dad passed away and I was doing the audio guide there. And there's a particular part of the cathedral in which he invites you to look up and sing underneath this small, unorthodox sheet roof have a vision of how the sound moves in this area in that particular space is kind of how angels in that particular space is kind of how angels live through and experience sound. through Bluetooth and all these technology through blue tooth and all these technology which connects me to the hearing world. And I was wondering are we, are deaf people, are hard of hearing people included in this idea of elevation of sound. So, I'm just going to read the first section from that. Echo. My ear amps whistle as if singing to Echo, Goddess of noise, the ravelled knot of tongues, of blaming birds, consonant crumbs of dull doorbells, sound swapped in my misty hearing aid tubes. Gaudi believed in holy sound and built a cathedral to contain it, putting hearing men from their knees as though deafness is a kind of Atheism. Who would turn down God? Even though I have not heard the golden decibel of angels, I had been living in a noiseless palace of a doorbell is pulsating light and I am able to answer. So, I'm going to read now from a new book, This is one of the first readings I'm giving from this book. This is one of the first readings I'm giving them this book. So, it'd be interesting to see how it feels to have these words in the world, how these poems feel in the body. This is a poem called, «Plantation Paint.» This is a poem called, «Plantation paint.» And it engages of this idea of care, engages with a poem by Lorna Goodison, called, «Different shades of black,» and a painting I saw in New Orleans called, «Plantation Burial.» And it

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was a sheer coincidence to be standing in the historic New Orleans collection, opposite a potential ancestor of mine, who'd been a painter and painted this, what was called, «A slave burial.» Black people who were enslaved and worked in the plantations were given their time to bury their debts and this painting captures that. And my wife, Tabitha, who's an art conservator, who's the job is literally caring for painting, and anything made of paper. So, I've learned so much just watching the kind of care she has to have in her work. So, there's so many different kinds of conversations around art happening in this conversation, as well as representation. So, «Plantation Paint,» after Lorna Goodison and «Plantation Burial.» The historic New Orleans collection, 1860 oil on canvas by John Antrobus. Tabitha the art conservator squints at the colour, tells me to paint depicting the black of these men huddled for a burial will decay before the cypress trees surrounding them will decay. «There are several kinds of black,» she says, and beside the cypress tree surrounding them is all I see as we stand, alive in this otherwise empty gallery. Why am I like this? What am I like? Who does it matter to? All details question my way of seeing. I worry, what kind of black would mark me? I am not the paint made from bind twigs or burnt shells. I am not the lamp full of oil. Tabitha tell me how you paint me? Tell me if I'm closer to as the white painter with my name than I am to the black preacher, his hands wide to the sky, the mahogany rot of heaven. Sorry, but you know, by now, that I can't mention trees without every shade of my family appearing and disappearing. I'm going to read a poem which came out... In my first book, I had a poem called, «Two guns in the sky for Daniel Harris.» And having a poem like that out the world, led to a few people actually writing to me who only resonated with the story of what happened to Daniel Harris, a deaf man who was killed by the police. It turned out that this was a common thing of someone with a disability, not just deaf people, a kind of miscommunication between someone's need and a misinformed or untrained armed police officer dealing with in effect members of the public with disabilities. So, I'm just going to read this poem. I was living in Oklahoma for a lot of the pandemic and this story came up about an indigenous man called, John T. Williams and something that happened to him and this poem uses captions, and there's a kind of dream scape home as well. And the way in which I suppose, speaks of care is this idea of care with information from the media and information of someone's life. So, «Captions & A Dream For John T. Williams So, «Captions&A Dream For John T. Williams of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth tribe.» Sound of unstable air. He fell facing away from the police officer four bullet holes on the left side of his body, hands holding a

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block of cedar wood and a three-inch blade he used to carve canoes and faces into totem poles. Announcing it is not over. The police officer said: I yelled at him to drop the knife, sound of something left out. It took five seconds to shoot. John T. Williams brothers sat on the pavement. He didn't turn away from the block of cedar wood that still shone on the road. Careful speech. The reporters pushed microphones into his face. My brother was deaf. Sound of no season. He spoke each word for the trembling broadcast as if his brother could still read his lips. Sound stolen. They took something beautiful from us. Wailing. I dream the crosswalk at Boren Avenue and Howell Street. In my dream John T. Williams appears in a whaling canoe. When he paddles, the water doesn't ripple. I ask if he has a favourite sound. The lake melts, becomes a narrow street. A kettle boils silently on the pavement. John T. Williams points at a house. There are still keys hanging in the green door. I followed him into the living room. He is setting the table for a meal. I asked nothing. He pours tea. There is tapping at the window. Someone is humming in the garden by a totem pole, summoning the sound of hands leaving a mark. Thinking about, I suppose the care that we can take for ourselves as right as I find that when I'm in the mode of writing a book of poems, I straight away checked myself into therapy. To make sure that I'm not relying on the poems or the practise of poetry to kind of resolve any of my own traumas or histories. So, I have a space outside of poetry to help me, I suppose, take care of myself. So, I'm going to read a poem, which I wrote specifically using the questions that came up in therapy. It's a real poem. So, this poem is called, «I Ran Away From Home To See How Long It'd Take My Mother To Notice.» (Antrobus clears throat) And it's just all the questions that came up in a particular therapy session for the many (indistinct). Are you my drunk teacher who took out game of rounders way too seriously? Are you the boy who said I had the ugliest smile on the playground? Are you the girl who toe punted my balls and made me a piss sack of blood? The girlfriend who slept with women behind my back, said it wasn't cheating? I don't know what I'm saying, would you be my friend? I spent hours in the house alone as a child. I left fingerprints on my sister's CDs so the music kept skipping! I wanted her friends to be my friends but I wasn't invited to her parties. Are you the party? Are you my dad lying on the sofa saying, I'll soon be dead? 'When I pull, what is existentialism?' Off my mother's shelf Simone de Beauvoir says, «The movement of my transcendence appears futile.» I don't know what that means so I put it back, fuck! Who loves me? I'm testing everyone! I need space for all my old and new gooey needs and projections. I need constant blaring

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validation alarms, give me award ceremonies, please observe my wall fame. Best Second-Guessing Over Achiever, Best Internal Monologue while drying dishes, Best Self-Promoter at the Charity Fundraiser, Best Awkward Silence in a Moving Vehicle, Best Bad Advice to a Couple in Crisis, Best Non-smoker in the Smoking Area, Most Self-Centred fear during the Global Pandemic, Lifetime Achievement Award For Most Convincing Head Nodes In A Crowded Pub, Most Triggered Person In An Empty House. Okay. So, I'm going to read a poem, which at first I was very nervous about because I wanted it to be a poem which takes care of the person in which I'm writing about. I think Haello has a poem in which she says, «You've got to be careful with what you do to people in poems, to known people, to real people. And I bumped into a friend of mine just before (indistinct) Pitt and we hadn't been in contact at all since we left school and it was obvious that he hadn't left Hackney and it was obvious that he hadn't left Hackney he was still very much kind of in part of the ends part of this area, which we grew up. And I've kind of lived all over the place. I've lived in different states in America. I've lived in South Africa, I've lived in parts of Europe. And so, it was interesting seeing him again and having this brief interaction. One of the things it brought back to me is this idea that poetry is essentially music from the place in which we are born and so just hearing him speak and being around him, brought back some of the music of the landscape of wherever you're born. And I hope that this poem honours that and cares for that. So, this poem is called, «And that.» After seeing a childhood friend outside of chicken shop in Dalston. Chicken wings and dat Boss man salt in them and dat Don't assault man give man a napkin Big man, no steroid and dat Dark times new street lights and dat How's man I'm getting by and dat Still boy dem harass Not beefin' not tagged man still trapped Cycle man pedallin' and dat On road new pavements levelled Cracknel changed still stay dwelling and dat Paradise moves but I got to land grab We E8 East man ain't got to adapt Our Kingdom got no land to hand back Man chat breeze Chat tread winds and dat You out ends got good job legit and dat? Locked off man dem stay plotting and dat Rah, Ray flower shorts you hipster in dat Man gone vegan? No chicken wings and dat. Yeah, okay I'm going to read some more poems. This book opens with a sequence speaking about the care and thinking about my time in education and how much the story of a nation is something which everyone is indoctrinated with, whatever country you're born in, you're indoctrinated with a story of your nation. And you grow up to have some pride in that the kind of official story of your nation. And when you start travelling, I'm sure a lot, a lot of British people with parents and family and

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heritage from countries who were essentially colonial subjects, you go anywhere in the Caribbean, you see all the names of all of these other places originally from England being transported to these islands and to these colonies, present colonies and former colonies of the British empire and how we aren't taught that and you're hit with a real kind of almost a nausea when you travel and you have to make sense of this, I suppose, we could call it this mis-education of our country. And no matter where I go in the world, it seems like everyone has some kind of un-learning to do in terms of themselves and their country. And this forum tries to do that, I suppose 'cause my name Antrobus takes root in this place in England, in Cheshire. And I went there and wrote this poem. I went there with my mom. (indistinct) This is called, «Antrobus or Land of Angels.» Wherever you are, you touch the bark of trees... different yet familiar says Czelaw Milosz. I can be fiendish, I can't be English, say ghosts. Some with shaved heads, some with cane-rows muttering themselves into notebooks. The barman's eyes in The Antrobus Arms become sharp gates when I claim to be English. My mother born here, My grandfather, a local preacher. «Oh, well then welcome,» he says or land your angels. There are enigmas in my deafness. I stare at the crest of gold lions behind the bar- I scar the cross of Davidic's line behind the bar- hear my ghosts say Fiendish? English? The barman calls the whole village and my name does the rounds. My mother drives us to Antrobus Hall. Two German Shepherds surround the call. I climb out it's raining. The dogs jump, their paws scraping a new coat of earth on my chest. A farmer appears, asks if we're descended from Edmund Antrobus. Sir Edmund Antrobus, third baronet slaver, beloved father, over-seer owner of plantations in Jamaica British Guyana and St. Kitts. I shake my head, avoid the farmer's eye. My mother and I tread the cemetery of St. Marks, Antrobus and see everyone buried here is of Antrobus. We look up and see hawks in the ash trees and sparrows in the wheat fields and the rain-soaked stones of Antrobus and off we walk the slick mirrors of wet roads, the curves of Barbers Lane between trees. I take a photo of our shadows, flung over the red berry bushes like black coats. And the last poem I'm going to read is for a friend of mine. I went to two schools, I went to the deaf school, I went to a hearing school, and this is for a friend of mine who passed away recently a couple of years ago. And his story stayed with me. I never thought it would be something I'll be given the opportunity to write about, but I did that to honour him. Thinking about what care is, who is entitled to care. And the injustices that go when we think about why wasn't this person cared for in a way? There's a constant conversation to be heard between, what I would call human

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rights abuses and disability rights and the right to live. Thank you so much for listening Thankful so much for listening and given me the space to be heard. «For Tyrone Givans,» The paper said, putting him in jail without his hearing aids was like putting him in a hole in the ground. There were no hymns for deaf boys. But who can tell we're deaf without speaking to us? Tyrone's name was misspelt in the HMP Pentonville prison system. Once I was handcuffed, shoved into a police van, I didn't hear the officer say why. I was saved by my friend's mother who threw herself in the road and refused to let the van drive away. Who could have saved Tyrone? James Baldwin attempted suicide after each of his loves jumps from bridges or overdosed. he killed his characters, made them kill themselves- Rufus, Richard, Black men who couldn't live like this. Tyrone, I won writing awards bought new hearing aids and heard my name through the walls. I bought a signed Baldwin book. The man who sold it to me didn't know you, me or Baldwin. I feel I rescued it. I feel failed. Tyrone, the last time I saw you alive, I dropped my pen on the staircase didn't hear it fall, but you saw and ran down to get it, handed it to me before disappearing, said, «You might need this.»

Zayneb Allak 00:47:14

Okay. First of all, thank you so much. Thank you so much Nat and Raymond for your readings and Bhanu obviously she's not here. So, to kick off the conversation now, about care and poetry, I wanted to just first start with my response to your readings, which was... I was surprised because I teach poetry and read poetry and I didn't think I would necessarily have this reaction, but I listened to you and thought, oh, I really needed that, I needed to hear them, and I really felt you making contact. And I really noticed the care that they were written with and the care in the readings. And wanted to ask you about, what Bhanu in her reading said, «I hope this reading reaches you.» And it felt like care, it felt like she was really caring for the poetry and for her listeners or for her readers. And I thought maybe we could start off the conversation by thinking about what you hope for your poems. Do you care? And how do you care about how they reach people and what happens as a result of it? Maybe, I don't know, maybe start with Raymond, 'cause you're not on mute. (Zayneb chuckles)

Raymond Antrobus 00:48:54

Yeah. I think it's such a generous response. Thank you Zayneb. Obviously,

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we have no control over what our poems do in the world once we've written them and they'd given to you, to the public, to the wider world and whatever happens there is just a blessing, I believe. I agree with what Bhanu said about this hope that they reach people. And I really do write with the belief that there's a real danger that everyone is in if we fail to care, if we fail to understand each other as a society. So, my hope is that the poems I write or even the lessons I teach or the talks I give, all of them just connect, land, spark new conversations, inspire, uplift, criticise, order- It'd be quite ambitious without poems when I think about what all of that, all of the hopes we have but ultimately it comes with the crop, it comes with the practise. Poetry is a care for language at the most kind, of at first internal level, how you kind of bring it out into something external to something shared. Nat's biography and you were talking about not biography, and you were talking about how many languages they've had that poems translated into. And every time I hear that, I can't lie, I get like poet jealousy, I'm just like, oh man! (Raymond laughs) Your poems are reaching so many people in so many languages, in so many different cultures, at so many different points of time. And the two languages I have ground my poetics in, are British, sign language and written language and spoken language. And I do classify each of those three things as different languages, with different fields, with different textures with different ways of being. So, as well as care, there's a real kind of act of faith becoming a poet, you really have to believe in what you're doing and you really have to, and I think so much of my teaching, when I speak with other poets there's so much of it is about telling other poets that their work matters and they're writing important poetry and that people need to hear what they have to say. And if we were careful with our poems, they will matter, they will sync.

Nat Raha 00:52:03

Oh, thanks Raymond - It's really interesting, 'cause you, as in Raymond, you mentioned about how your partner's a curator, a preserver of art-

Raymond Antrobus 00:52:13

Yeah, yeah.

Nat Raha 00:52:16

And I guess in that idea of concept of being a curator in the art world is like that you care for the works and obviously there's a whole thing about how

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artworks often cared more for, receive more care than the people who make them, especially when we're talking about black and brown and disabled and other marginalised folks, right? But I think for me, there is a similar thing in the writing. So it's about, maybe like after the act of having written a poem and obviously like sometimes that's really contextual, since I was really writing a poem for a particular context or particular occasion, a particular moment and though the context of those moments in terms of like who is in them, what is happening, be that political moment, be that a response to a political moment, I guess like I'm often thinking very directly about who I'm kind of writing this poem for. And maybe there's something similar for me when I'm thinking about how they ever going into the world. So, I think, as somebody who's published a lot of my work myself and also working through a lot of small press. And yeah, small press spaces, it sometimes does feel a bit more specific, so for all of the work that ended up in (indistinct) body I put most of out myself as zines. I put most of out myself as zines. And it became like, these were just like objects. I was carrying with me when I was travelling, when go to do some readings. I was in the states for while I did some readings there and just hanging out to people. And the people who I often met in those moments, have since become some of my closest friends. And some of them are also poets who are also publishing and they're the kind of moments of publication And their the kind of moments of publication or the moments of like the poems getting out into the world that really almost matter the most for me because they're the ones where it looks like we're actually in some kind of like, loving friendship, caring relation between me and the person who's tending the work putting out into the world and that's what really matters. With the translations, a lot of it has been like that. Sometimes it's like just somebody who I know from the internet, who's like, «Hey, can I translate your poem?» Sometimes I have people I've known for years and sometimes I have people who I just met 'cause we have shared political interest or we're talking about politics of care, we're talking about queer politics or something, and that has brought us together. So that does still feel like that tends. And maybe so beyond publication, I guess there's also the performance and yeah, thank you about that context of both what it means to me to perform in different spaces and where do I feel that I'm putting out work in a way there kinds of forms of holding and tending and like support and I guess even just hoping other people might feel heard in some of the words or in some of the phrases, those moments of connection with an audience or with a listener or a reader are going to come in more specific places than say more dispersed general ones.

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So, I'm writing all these poems that have, it's like, go! I'm talking to like the fam's out there, right? The people I care about, who maybe out already outside of either marginalised or denigrated in the dominant normative economies of care 'cause care always this economy and it's always about reassuring patriarchy in some way. (Nat chuckles) Yeah. And so that's why I could talk for hours about how changes from the different contexts that you're reading in. Sometimes you do reading and you're like, oh my, I don't even feel cared for in this space, let alone in my poems. There are other times I'm reading and I feel it's like the communities here and this is our work and this is where my work makes the most sense even if it's like different aesthetically or something like that. Yeah. Oh, you're on mute Zayneb. (Zayneb chuckles)

Zayneb Allak 00:56:32

So maybe it'd be interesting to think about the limits of care and particularly in relation to poetry. So, for example, I know now that you've written about, you write and research about the limits of care that's part of your research and the idea that a poem, it can be like a hug but it's not like a roof over your head or it's not like a hot meal on your table. It's not that kind of practical care but then when I was listening to your poems and I was listening to Raymond's and Bhanu's all of them, and thinking about Raymond speaking about Gaudi's cathedral, I was thinking these poems are spaces filled with light, filled with sound like these are all little cathedrals that I can enter and they do give me a kind of roof over my head but there's a limit to the care that they can offer. I don't know if either of you want to comment on that? Maybe not Nat first.

Nat Raha 00:57:39

Yeah. Yeah. I think it is and obviously with Bhanu's reading. Bhanu's just really been presenting us the work in this, like when the poem is up against the conditions of caring in order to exist, that's something I can really relate to too without having to go into my personal story about it. But maybe it's like a roof over the heart or roof in your head, right? 'Cause in all of these moments of deprivation, we still need art, we still need poetry. It's like the bread and roses thing, right? It's like, there's no point just having the bread 'cause it affects you physically, psychosomatically. If you don't have that enriched and nourishment in you. Yeah. I definitely think about that and I think on the one hand from trying to write poems from these moments of care and also trying to be like, it's not always easy, care, isn't natural. I hear conversations in terms

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of the research side of the things I'm doing at the moment, where people are talking about the appropriation of the discourse of care or the complete like reduction of it to total banality. It's like when Nichola Sturgeon comes on TV, I don't know if it's Scotland, when Nichola Sturgeon comes on TV and says, «Oh, everybody has Scotland is going to be cared for during the pandemic,» there's something she said last spring and we're like, mate were on the streets handing out masks to people who don't have any money, you're not doing us anything in that sense, sure she's doing stuff, but it's that thing of like, that's the kind of appropriation of this language of care, 'cause that's appropriate in this kind of political context that me and the people around me, who were doing this kind of a mutual end support work that we're also like it's a politics of care, it's an economy of care, it doesn't mean anything without this context. It's funny, 'cause then it's like, oh, those are carers and are also people who write poems or make art. And on the one hand, it's like it's what Audrey Lorde said, «Poetry is that the easiest of the arts, the cheapest of the arts,» right? You don't need money to write poetry, you don't need a fancy degree, maybe it will give you some space to write, to think about it. But it does also turn into like, yeah pumps going to do something else they can produce some kind of resonance in your body that maybe makes it more possible to both continue caring if you're a carer or maybe provide some kind of resonance that gives you some support and some hope to go on. And yeah, I'm sure Raymond can talk about that as well in great detail 'cause I feel like that's how I was receiving the references to both Baldwin and Raymond's work. And talking about fictionalising things that are happening to Baldwin's lovers. And in terms of that suicides, it's a lot but those scenes are incredible, when the guy jumps off the - spoiler for another country, and it's really intense, And it's really intense, it's really difficult, it's so astonishing and that really stands up was the moment of just like an event in literature... I'm not super articulate, but I hope... I'm going to pass the mic.

Raymond Antrobus 01:01:03

No for sure. I resonate so much of what's said there, the economy of care. Put in poetry into our work and putting the work out there carefully is only 50% of the work, it is a very practical thing once the work is out there, we have to live our practises. And so, I think what the poet has ground in me is actually having quite specific, I suppose, ideas for where the poems write may end up, like I do imagine them in the classroom, I do imagine them in groups, prison groups. I do imagine them basically in all the spaces which I have already been

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or spaces a bit like what I was saying about community, other poets, other readers, friends, family, people we care about, people we care for. And there's something about the life of a poem or the life of any of our works, the way it moves through the world, can gift us back and care for us back. I'll give you an example of that. I wrote a poem in my first book, «Would you make in British?» And this poem came out of... I had these students who were being pretty unruly and wouldn't sit still in the classroom, so they had to be taken out of their main mainstream class and put into a smaller classroom and 74 of them and me and another teacher, poet, Christian Foley, we discovered something interesting about these particular boys, they're 15-year-old boys who wouldn't sit still unless they saw someone else working. So, it was strange, we were like okay, what we'll do is, before we let them into the classroom, we'll let them see us working more than anything. So, sit down and write. And so, we would spend the first 10 minutes of each lesson kind of in silence, just writing, letting them see us work, letting them see our heads down, writing a poem. And at the end of every one of those lessons, we would then share what we wrote with the students and the students will then would say to us, «Oh, wow!» Because of seeing that, they would give us like 10 minutes of their own quiet focus time 'cause then they want to compete, then they want to be part of whatever is happening in the end whatever is kind of been grounded with them seeing us be writers. And so, I wrote to making British in the classroom with these students and I feel like part of the energy of that has gone into the poem and it's moved through the world in a way that it's then ended up on the GCSE curriculum, that poem is now being taught in schools. And so, there's something very real for me in the energy that you put into the work matters, because it does affect or can affect the way in which it is received. I believe in this stuff, I don't think it's some kind of, what's the word, overly kind of romanticising or ideology I think is real.

Zayneb Allak 01:05:00

Nat, were you going to respond to that? You looked as if you were about to say something.

Nat Raha 01:05:03

I was saying totally, yeah.

Zayneb Allak 01:05:05

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Yeah. You'd probably be interested to know Raymond that a colleague of mine was doing so... Well, a few of us did some workshops with the NHS hospitals in Manchester, writing workshops, and a colleague of mine used your poem, «The first time I wore hearing aids,» as a prompt for a creative writing workshop. So, there's an example of the energy of your poem and in a context where the people who care were being given some care in terms of poetry. Like there's an example that's beyond you, that's even beyond your... Yeah, so interesting. So maybe a really practical, I suppose, a practical question related to care and crafts, maybe considering that there are going to be some people listening to this who are doing writing workshops, what does it mean to read and write with care or read and write carefully? What does it mean?

Raymond Antrobus 01:06:32

I think the thing that comes to mind is this idea of every poem you write in order to function as a poem, has to have a head and a heart, you can't have just one of those things and the head and the heart need to be functioning together despite the different outlooks or functions in the world. And I think we really need to apply that; it often pays off to apply that to our reading as well as our writing. And this is coming from someone who has read poems that the Ted Hughes deaf school poem and had such a visceral painful response to it because I saw it as a kind of an assault. And an assault mainly because a poet had written such an unconsidered un-cared for poem about deaf people and teachers and teachers of the deaf, it was just kind of all-around failure, I'm going to say that an all-round failure which took, I think which needed a response which wasn't just critical but was also one that which was careful. So, in choosing to respond to Ted Hughes after reading his poem I had to think, okay, well, Ted Hughes is known for these nature-based extended metaphors and I can engage with his work 'cause I've read his work carefully and then I had to imagine, well, I don't think poets, like many of us get that same kind of care. I don't think we get the same kind of critical care even in our country in which we are writing but I want to show as a poet I'm paying attention. And we are able to engage in these questions of craft and in these questions of not just identity 'cause it's always language, it always comes back to the language. Yeah. I hope that it's succinct enough.

Nat Raha 01:09:24

Yeah. There's something you just said that really chimed with, so how was

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having discussion as part of the library critics with Sarah Hao and a couple of other writers and we're talking about just critical responses and stuff, I think there's something about why other poets are often the best critics and being the best not necessarily in the objective way because of that, because we know what it means to care for other writers' work 'cause that's what matters to us that's why poetry matters to us because they've been moments where a poem resonated or something happened or took over our lives gave us some script to live by. And maybe that's why we're good at also tending other people's poetry 'cause I think you're totally right, there is sometimes a lack of care in terms of like how poetry is received. What does it mean to write with care? I think partly because so much of my writing comes from is from a space or from experiences that have often fallen out, again outside of this economy of care, I am a survivor of assault and I think a lot about the forms of like denigration that I've experienced in the humbling experience of my life. And like so many of my write still kind of like running through that even if I'm not talking about it directly, it's still like that reparative need is still driving this work, especially in these Niners, I think, but in terms of a practise, I'm like, oh, actually time is really important 'cause sometimes you do write a poem 'cause it's on an impulse for an occasion that's very soon something's happening. And so sometimes that can be really careful as an art and sometimes that can be really rush but sometimes that's one form of time is short time but sometimes those poems need time to develop and that might be years, that's fine. And that's actually part of how to really press on what I want this poem to do or to say, or to look like or sound like. Sometimes that doesn't come straight out from the moment of writing sometimes that will emerge way later. And like when I was writing, «The blubber, guts, Southern Leith,» for Map, the editor Rake Mara, that's the guest editor for that thing, he's a super, super caring, amazing editor and exemplary in terms of how to care for this spur moment publication. And I needed like two months, three months longer than I originally had. I was I only had a month but that's what the poem needed and in that period the span grew 'cause it was also like working through all this really heavy horrific stuff and having to do this research under lock down also, I was like, I didn't even get into the full eye of the storm of horror 'cause their archive was closed. (Nat chuckles) Yeah, sometimes it's just time. Sometimes it's taking the time I would say, taking the time it needs and knowing that, trusting yourself when you're like, okay, maybe it's fine and also sometimes poetry's provisional arts, that's cool too. It's fine too but yeah.

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Zayneb Allak 01:12:48

Brilliant. Thank you so much. And listening to you Nat, there are so many things that you say that sounds to me like the start of a new poem. (Zayneb laughs) Even the way that you're talking about the care with which you're writing is really so thoughtful and careful and evocative. I guess, if we're going to finish now just to sum up a few things that I've noted down that have been so interesting to think about as I've been listening to you, the idea that care in reading and writing and criticism is to do with a combination of your head and your heart, it's something embodied and emotional and rational. What you said Nat, about poem as a script to live by, how could we not care about poetry, if that's what we're expecting from it? How could we not care about that? And that beautiful thing that you said about poem as a roof over the heart thought that was just really evocative and speaks to what we're thinking about in terms of care and poetry and how we can care for it, it can care for us. Thanks so much to Bhanu and Raymond and Nat, it's been such a pleasure listening to you this evening. Tonight's event is part of a fantastic line up of free public events, which have taken place every evening this week, exploring Care in the Anthropocene, care in Writing and Inter-species Care. Tomorrow's events on Freedom and Care, featuring Maggie Nelson in conversation with Sean Hewitt is our final event in the series. So please see our website at www.criticalpoetics.co.uk/summer for full details. We'd like to thank our partners Nottingham Contemporary, Curated & Created at Nottingham Trent University and Metronome. Technical support for this event is kindly provided by Nottingham Contemporary. The books related to this event are available via Five Leaves Bookshop, Nottingham's leading independent bookseller. To find out more, please see the details in the event description.

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