

L1- lecture

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One of the major influences over the past decade in my work has been being connected to and now being a course leader for an undergraduate course called experimental art and performance at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. The course is a full time bachelors that's very much angled at students who want to explore performance as it moves through the world and in dialogue with other disciplines, such as fine art, or visual art sculpture included poetry, architecture, and also perhaps, more kind of theoretical discourses as well. One of the kind of main structure of the course is that students bring a kind of agency to their learning. So they undertake these experimental unit based processes alongside theoretical investigations that think about experimental and radical practices in different contexts, inspired by an in dialogue with critical theory, from kind of politics and critical race studies through to post colonial theory, performance studies, of course, theater studies, philosophy and beyond. And the kind of logic of the course really centers pedagogy as a collaborative practice. That's something that happens between kind of as a transfer or exchange. And pedagogy has informed my work not only in my teaching, or in the ways in which we navigate, for example, talking about cultural leadership, or cultural politics, which are perhaps as influential in the structure and learning of the course as composition and performance making are, I'm currently working with a group of international colleagues on a project, which will ultimately become a book called performance pedagogies. That's very much interested in carving out the space to think about how performance operates pedagogically, but also how pedagogies sort of in are engaged within performance. And this is, of course, off the back of a lot of movement towards reflecting on the place of the kind of educational within artistic practice. And beyond which we've seen many arts organizations and institutions adopt, as well as the kind of interdisciplinary moment which I think performance always has the relationship to these multiple disciplines, but also to thinking more broadly about what can be enabled in thinking about the kind of transfers of performance pedagogies and performance pedagogies as a field. And this is maybe a provocation that we explore on the performance arts course as well. Where we really engaged in many different ways to thinking about how performance is a practice and a critical lens and a process through which to kind of engage with questions of social justice, of kind of political autonomy, of kind of collaboration and Commons building. But also thinking about what do we understand to be radical practices? And in what context? are certain practices rendered radical? And, and what are the kind of different ways in which artists are constantly responding to these kind of tension points through an aesthetic and dramaturgical practice.



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Of course, some of this also feeds into my own research more broadly. I one of the kind of formative experiences for me has been engaging with the performance philosophy network, for which I am now an editor of the margin sections of their journal. And the margin section is really dedicated to non standard and creative approaches to examining the relationship between performance and philosophy. And it's very much an ethos that dialogues

between form and content, but also looks to open up some of the ways in which and scholarly work has been perhaps configured or boxed into different ways. And here, you'll see that there's a mention of Victor criticism, aphorisms, manifestos, and visual essays. But more broadly, performance philosophy has opened up a space to openly engage with the ways in which performance thinks and does, and the ways in which performance does philosophy, and how kind of philosophy features within performance. And this opening has been really formative for me because it's also enabled me to think more conceptually about my artistic practice and my research, as it engages with perhaps particular processes such as the speculative or the fictional or the kind of in preventionist are the performative instead of different ways. And as we will move to the presentation, that's something that I'm quite eager to think through and to kind of think, on these multiple relationships with knowledge production, but with also the systems in which knowledge gets reproduced or articulated. And within knowledge, I'm also thinking about kind of artistic practice. These are kind of I've just offered them here as examples of some of the academic writing that I do. A big part of my research has been exploring borders or thinking about the relationship between formance and borders in different ways, and specifically, moving through the multiple relationships that are invited by this construction of Eastern Europe as a kind of almost a fictional kind of constructions, but also one that reveals very multiple power relationships between East and West Europe, between these very colonialist internalist narratives of Europe, that shape what is rendered to be a periphery or a margin of kind of Europe, and what is kind of legitimated or placed as the center. And of course, I'm saying this, as I'm kind of speaking from within the UK, which is absolutely and continues to be kind of Neo colonial center for some of this. But also, as I will talk a little bit about later in my work, the kind of understanding what anti colonial resistance has meant within Eastern Europe. But also troubling this idea of Eastern Europe, which is often a kind of racialized minoritized group within the West, but also it has complicity within certain colonial histories within Europe and beyond, and has been an important part of my work. And some of the articles that I shared here have also used or deployed different, perhaps creative methods into kind of the the writing and the kind of dissemination of the research. So body states and cross territorial choreographies is an article that speaks specifically to a moment in the UK, where, with the exception of Romania, and Bulgaria as a two countries into the European Union, which was a kind of very legit legislated, kind of entrance in the UK, this question of low skilled work, or ideas around privileges around the world and labor became really prominent. And in that work and thinking around how questions of labor navigate between artists context of art or artistic practice, or in other words, how are things might sometimes be able to move borders, and how that relates to the ways in which low skilled work is constructed, depending on the kind of sector context in which work happens, but also how wider systems of immigration and governance regulate that relationship, both kind of in the UK and and beyond.



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And the vampires flow towards the west examines the ecological poetics of migration and pacifically Eastern European migration in the UK, and the UN, I kind of use the figure of the vampire, to kind of unpack or think through the ways in which it's been kind of deployed speculatively, but also as a start contract with certain kinds of aesthetic representations of these communities, which tend to really focus either on a kind of nostalgia or on kind of aesthetic ideas of Ruin in different ways, or margin or periphery. That, of course, usually other the most racialized communities, even within the kind of diasporic cultures. But that essay kind of very much uses sound and the sonic as a mode of kind of engagement. And that's, again, something that runs kind of through my work in different ways. I want to perhaps move a little bit to talk about how the relationship in my work between Commons collaboration and wider political structures within this framework, which I will talk a bit more in the my criticism lecture, around nonconforming criticism. And non conforming criticism is a term that's really emerged from over a decade of practice and research that I've done that really looks at articulating criticism outside of this, his its history in relation to mainstream media and the development of the public sphere, which in itself, I think, is perhaps a very nation bound, and quite kind of patriarchal and often quite colonial mode of understanding, authorship and Commons building. So I'm perhaps interested in bringing other structures, political structures that are outside of kind of histories of, of democracy, for example, and that often happen within kind of grassroots activism and anti colonial resistance, and to try and understand to use those lenses to understand forms of critique or practices of criticism. And that are

perhaps not legible or understood as criticism from kind of salons or assemblies or artistic practices that explicitly engaged with critique through to experimental modes of writing and criticism that have perhaps a different relationship to theatre and performance.



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So, I'm going to talk you through a little bit some of the projects where I've sort of played with some of ideas. And I'm going to do so progressively, partly because this journey for me started with being a kind of critic in Maine working in mainstream press and feeling very dissatisfied with both feeling very at odds with that as an ecology and finding it a very monocultural and mono vocal ecology, but also feeling perhaps disillusioned with the kind of limits in which those presumed relationships happened both because it is such a precarious ecology, as we know, particularly impacted by kind of populism. But also it is such a highly economized ecology, too. And so this particular project was one of the first projects that I did that sought to create or explore different relationships, particularly with experimental performance, which has been the context for a lot of the work that I've done in relation to criticism, and but also kind of more broadly thinking about spaces for cultural dialogue or critique, that are kind of exploring different relations. So perhaps, not always thinking about performance, but sometimes thinking alongside or with performance. And in my lecture, I'm going to talk a little bit about the kind of line edges or, or what is informed some of that kind of thinking. This was a project with an experimental UK based theatre company called forest entertainment. And this was in response to a durational performance, called cazuela. taking place over 24 hours, in 2014. You'll see here at some some examples of the work that came out of that project. cazuela is a performance that is founded on kind of the interrogatory, or the kind of asking of questions, there's two members of the company kind of vaguely dressed up as kind of have clown makeup. And they sit in a circle. And when asked questions and want answers questions, and that is the kind of logic of the 24 hour performance and of course, the company rotates throughout the 24 hours, who who gets to, to be in both of those roles. And the work really, she moves from kind of to feeling like we're seeing two friends talk to a kind of interrogation or other kind of power structures within this kind of quiz in different ways. And so the setup for the live writing was quite similar. We had a similar amount of people, including myself, writing in parallel to the work and we watched the work on a live stream. This was before live streams are kind of made, perhaps more more common, because of the pandemic, over exactly the same 24 hour period as the performance. So that means we were writing at very different times of the day. That means we were kind of carrying, I guess, the duration in our bodies in a particular way. And of course, because of that, and because of the structure, the main mode of writing was online. So we essentially did 24 hour blog, live writing, which was a series of posts, each in response, sometimes immediately, and sometimes later on to the discussion and the work that was unfolding in front of us. And sometimes that meant the kind of explicit engagement with digital culture in different ways. Sometimes it was kind of trying to attend to the many contexts that are implicated in this act of writing alongside. And sometimes it was about engaging with an aesthetics or a dramaturgy that emerged at that particular point in time. And because of the duration, there was also kind of cross referencing within the blog, but also between the kind of performers who are reading some of our writing, and the kind of writers that we're taking place that we're kind of exploring some of these ideas. And



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emerging from that was a pilot project that we ran with a collective called Steak House live and Steak House live, are a group of curators very much committed to exploring experimental and live art and the different structures and modes of presentation but also supporting kind of experimental work. And we worked with them to think about the kinds of models of writing that might be in more productive dialogue or that might open up different kinds of dialogue with experimental performance and live arts. And of course, because of my own kind of experience, I use these terms quite interchangeably. And but we are, I guess what brings these together is a kind of commitment to aesthetics and dramaturgy is that are kind of political or, or that are interested in kind of radically reorganizing parts of kind of experience are interrogating how we experience and what artistic practice might do in the world. So the

program consisted of two workshops where we brought together people who are perhaps familiar with live art, but we're not so always familiar with the practice of criticism in any way, which allowed us to kind of move through a series of provocations, about the politics of critical writing, and of what political writing might offer a durational imbedded writing project, which happened within the framework of a festival, that Steakhouse they've curated, which was kind of a couple of days of experimental work, some of which was durational, some of which was installation page, and some of which was kind of live work. And part of the kind of pilot or modeling was to really think about what being embedded within the festival meant with being more visible as one of the kind of people thinking in relation to the work over that time, but also the many different conjectures or assemblies that happen within the temporary community of a festival, and how writing or critic quality can also be a kind of a form of creative critical practice within that space, but also facilitate or perhaps make space for some of these dialogues to happen. We also had a series of reflective articles, and one of the kinds of publications that emerged was critical interruptions, Volume One. So critical interruptions is one of the kind of collectives I work within. We call ourselves a serbo, Romanian critical cooperative, founded by myself and Brianna young kovitch. And the our work has kind of slowly shifted over time from these kind of explicit criticism projects, through perhaps a broader kind of explorations of criticality, performance and digital writing practices. So critical interruptions, Volume One, brought together most some of the writing that happened within the Steakhouse life festival, and gave a kind of also brought about a really interesting question of publishing, digital writing, and publishing digital culture. And the ways in which the kind of critical acts itself are kind of sitting in the multiple relationships of the project as well. I'm going to move a little bit talk about participation. And I'm not really meaning participation lightly here.



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I guess one of the main things that I think the kinds of criticisms that I've been exploring or thinking about both, in my research and within my work has really thought about the kind of democratic Commons but also the limits of the democratic and perhaps moving towards more radical political structures that might influence or shape, both how we make space to think together, but also how we can make space for criticism to become a kind of collaborative, and sometimes critical. Yeah, common space practice policies. And so one of the projects that has been formative and kind of that thought was another festival collaboration, this time where the festival called week festival in Folkestone curated by an organization called performance space, which is very much committed to experimental and live art and, and they were kind of based on the coast of England. And this was the kind of writing project that really one I really wanted to explore the ways in which forms that might feel more habitual, or that have already have a relationship to artistic and cultural discourse could be deployed to examine our kind of thinking relationships or experiential relationships with performance. And so I chose to focus on the dedication, in part because the festival itself was exploring the multiple ideas around wake. So wake both as a kind of ritual, or process of mourning, or holding grief, but also wake wakefulness as a kind of particular kind of state. And so one of the kind of remains of the project was to think about what the dedication might offer as a form as a critical form. And as a mode of thinking about how we tend or pay attention, or kind of sit with performance, and so is also kind of very much interested in the intimacies and encounters that happen within a kind of being with work rather than necessarily after or sometimes before. So it involved kind of two different activities. One was a series of dedications that myself and a group of writers and critics kind of undertook over the course of the festival and respond to and in dialogue with some of the works. And these dedications could be letters or associations. And a more kind of traditional, I am dedicating this work to, or this work has kind of connected me with. But we also had a kind of open forum for some of the other audiences and artists are really the community of the festival, to offer their own dedications to the work. And these were some of the prompts that you will have received if you would have engaged with that process, which could have also been kind of face to face for during the festival, but also online. So some of the provocations offer kind of spaces to reflective of memory, the what are the forgotten, and around kind of difference, or are the ways in which certain thoughts feel, perhaps then welcomed sometimes or seem surprising in the moment of being with performance, difficulty, which in the line age of a scholar, Jennifer Doyle, sometimes offers us a space to also reflect on ourselves and our own kind of difficult negotiations or ideas around, or expectations around performance, and accountability and challenge, and, of course, the space to share a dedication. And these were all some of these were

also collated, collected in a book called states of week, which was also published as a result of the creative work of the festival, which brings together some of the work that we have done, and some of the work that audiences kind of contributed as well.



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Another structure and I mentioned that kind of speculative before, is, but it really feels like it's kind of coming back here is the work I do with the Department of feminist conversations, which is a kind of collective and really community, thinking about kind of feminist exchanges and spaces for critique and gathering. And so the letter or letter writing is part of the kind of spaces that we sort of reflect on and this particular project, it's called letters to the future. It is kind of monthly dispatch, that is a sort of invitation to think, to the future, and an open invitation so the archive can be seen online. And I will share some of the links to these projects, in the session notes as well lead us to the future really use the letter as a space to kind of interrogate our relationship to temporality, and to perhaps finding ways of decentering more normative ideas about time and about change in vision, but also with authorship structures. So this is always written by one member of the collective but always signed as the department whether it's a kind of Guest writer, and or whether it's it's an existing kind of member of the collective. And there's some reflections that we've made that also connect to histories of critique that are not always articulated within, for example, kind of the development of mainstream press, but they might be articulated within feminist and more radical kind of print cultures, such as queer print cultures, for example. So we're interested in how kind of you can we can think in alliance with those languages that are often quite excluded, and feel very separate from the kind of histories of criticism that we've grown accustomed to. Chapters is another kind of project with a collective called something other and something other really emerged as a desire to foreground a space for writings and things about performance. And it's many others, there's a kind of nod to pay your feelings assertion around performance and documentation as being something other. But of course, we approach that with criticality as well. And one of the kind of, I guess, provocations that has emerged from my work with these experimental forms of criticism has also been around thinking about language. And multilingualism has also thinking about kind of the the articulation of criticism, and is not always something being of use or useful to performance, but also being a space for kind of assembly and Political Practices in relation to performance and sometimes an ally ship or solidarity with it. So something other kind of always welcomes experiments with performance and writing. These chapters are always themed, and they bring together artists and other cultural workers, thinkers, and theorists who are interested in responding to that theme or whose work kind of chimes with that theme. And sometimes, that can be as explicit as sort of reflecting on a performance but also there might be more kind of creative, critical work that emerged at this intersection. And of course, there are much broader ecologies that are being invoked here from for example, poetics and literature, critical theory and beyond that are kind of playing with these paradigms. And we're explicitly bringing performance here in the mix. And then perhaps, as you've seen her talk about collective work in lots of different ways. But I guess one of the words, one of the things I want to move to and share with you is around the kind of intersection between different pedagogies of writing but also collective processes for for thinking about criticism. Spell writing has been a project that I've developed in collaboration with the city company over a number of years within the framework of their festivals still Festival, which is another festival of contemporary and experimental performance work more broadly, the kind of structure of the festival changed and I sort of came in when the festival was already thinking about its own relation to to resourcing critical dialogue, not in a way that sort of closes down the possibility for criticality, which I think is a is often an anxiety around kind of criticism. And that is perhaps rooted in the kind of colonial logic implicit in criticism, which perhaps I will speak a little bit when we talk, but also to kind of open up or do really think about what acknowledging our own embedding or our own intimacies within performance might be. And spell writing sort of grew out of work that had already been played with before I



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came by open dialogues, which is collective made up of Mary Patterson and Rachel Lewis clapper in the work of

Baron Schmidt and Johanna Linsley and others who had been playing with critical forms within the confines of the festival. I wanted to bring, I guess, the idea of kind of pedagogies as a collective sort of training space. And so every year we, for a number of years, we brought together mostly local writers, to think about the multiple relationships that implicit between experimental performance and criticism, and to kind of use the theme of the festival as a provocation that might get us to reflect on the forms and politics and dramaturgy is of critical writing. So this year that you're looking at here, takes the festivals theme of honor Master, think about embodiment, but also assembly. And you'll see the kind of listening of this bill writers, this is from 2016. And their work is also now available on the website to look and perhaps differently to some of the projects that we've looked at. There was the different temporality because of the duration, the longer duration of the festival that really allowed us to both kind of be present in lots of different ways, but also enabled everyone to kind of hold their own temporality or duration or relationship to kind of performance. Coastal undercurrents, similarly was a project, specifically commissioned by home live art as part of their coastal currents. And really, unlike the previous work that I've mentioned, in mostly took place before the festival, and it was a series of kind of exploratory workshops with a group of local writers to think about the kinds of atmospheres, politics and tensions about what it means to kind of create a critical culture within a specific place. And the different ways in which and who gets to speak and how they do so are kind of regulated, but also how we might think about cooperative structures for critical for experimental criticism within this context. I want to move a little bit to talk about my artistic practice, although I very much see all of these projects are as sort of interrelated. But one of the this relationships I guess, that I have been brought about, in my criticism work, also kind of feature quite heavily in some of my research and artistic work. This was the project I wanted to share with you. Part of a brilliant book called artists border, panic competing, which brings together a number of artists reflections on borders, and their own kind of experiences to do with borders. And in this work, which was made in 2018, which is really worth mentioning, because it was a very particular kind of moment in the UK that really saw the really dominant hostile environment, which was explicitly a policy that began in 2012. That sought to essentially criminalized what the government rendered to be illegal migration, but whose effects really spend way more beyond that's led to the kind of regular profiling and kind of violent governance of both Britishness and foreignness within the UK and but also held the kind of bureaucracy that meant that a bank clerk or a landlord could kind of had a ride or was being made to feel like they are kind of border guard. And of course, we see some of the effects of these policies in the more current post Brexit kind of landscape. That is sort of really led to a different overhaul of the immigration regime that even more cruelly kind of punishes precarious migrants, particularly asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, but also creates further kind of racialization within kind of migrant communities. And in the kind of new and emerging UK borders and immigration bill. This is specifically reflected on this kind of foregrounding of low skilled work by kind of eight to pacifically, Romanian and Bulgarian migrants. And I kind of aesthetically looked at all the different kind of natural borders that were kind of also crossing points or points of contention between Romania and its neighboring countries, while also kind of reflecting on kind of memories, some of them real, and some of them fictional, of these kind of, I guess, border places. But what I did was on in dialogue with that I wanted to really think through the ways in which the kind of home office and language so the kind of immigrant main kind of body that regulates immigration in the UK, was sort of creating these relationships between migration and labor in very particular ways.



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Another critical interruptions work at this time from 2019 patrolling, perhaps took a similar approach. But we were very much interested in thinking about border patrols and of unrecognized states in this particularly relates to transmit Austria and our pause there. And we took frameworks of durational, endurance and body based performance and marry those with techniques of speculative fiction and critical writing to think about events of secularization in within these politically disputed border lands. So the whole project took the kind of duration of a shift at a border town in a disputed kind of border town, and took the kind of formal register of the usual kind of bureaucratic language of border crossings. So you'll see the kind of four forms that we used were entrance and exit incident report, observation and declaration. And we really looked at the kinds of power relations but also intimacies and violences that can occur within these very particular kind of, of borders, using kind of durational performance,

and both kind of real life incidents, but also kind of speculative incidents. And finally, as a kind of development of some of this thinking, was a commission for performing borders, as was patrolling cold spells for a border town, where I sort of continued to think about border rings and practices at the borders, or in places that are kind of whose sort of histories continue to be very present in people's lived experiences of borders. But also super impose these with thinking about the spell, both in relation to histories of witchcraft and folklore, but also specifically, as a kind of Roma line edge, which, which is really important, both to me, but also to these broader thinking is about place that are kind of not bound by a nation state, but acknowledge the many kind of colonial violence is implicit in that. So spells for important a town also thought about this process of retro jadad, which was the process of returning kind of state of land after 89 within certain European countries, which is both a kind of act of violence and active liberation, but also a highly kind of corrupt procedure. So I wanted to think about the many territorial politics that are implicated within this idea of ceding land, both as a kind of reparative act and as a kind of violent act as well. It's a multi lingual commission where I had conversations or extended invitation to kind of other colleagues and artists working or thinking about these questions. So you'll see the technology tewara the techno wage by Mihai Landrigan, who is one of the founders of Jubilee pen, a Roma Theatre Company in Romania and one of the only in Romania where I've kind of put together an interview but also shared some of their work. And the an extract from transnistrian writer Natalia Grauer called the state has no time for Coronavirus, which is a extract of a play an interview with Rosanna corca, who is the leading activist and cultural organizer, an artist based in Moldova who's doing a lot of work surrounding kind of culture in rural parts of Moldova. And you'll see the spell for independence which is an extract from the manifesto for an independent cultural sector in Moldova, the soundscape for kind of Roma futurism another dragon and Jubilee pen sort of work. And a couple of kind of offerings for me that really kind of speak to the multiple kind of ethnic histories and colonial legacies, but also Neo colonial kind of politics within this part of Europe. archives have now to was perhaps extended some of this thinking to reflecting or kind of being brought up as a part of a larger project of querying archives. And this is the project from 2018 that was commissioned by live art Development Agency and engineer a project with something other. And we spend some time with experimental feminist performance of the 70s and 80s. And the result was a series of like Sonic artworks that speak to kind of the idea of absence within archives, but also the kind of embodied histories that are so connected to that particular kind of line age and political moment.



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I guess I've I've been mentioning collectives, a fair few. And they have been a kind of big, big part of my work. This is writing shop, a long term collaborative project between four European critics that's been running for over a decade, at the center of which is an interrogation of the ways in which political governance relates to kind of critical ecologies in different ways, partly because of our multiple geographic locations. But also partly because what we wanted to do is to really think about the ways in which we might grow and create these different ecologies and structures over a much longer period of time. And kind of taking time as a, as an important kind of container within this work, but also friendship as the kind of particular alliance that might also offer a critical framework for thinking performance. generative constraints, which is a committee for examining art, politics, and theory, and one of the ways in which we work is to very much interrogate or explore some of the kind of political resonances of committee as a structure for collaboration, while also navigating kind of academic and artistic contexts or perhaps, and practice research in multiple ways. This, the project here is a score from a larger project called breakup variations, which explores kind of romantic breakups as well as political and ecological ruptures. And it's a project very much interested to kind of play with scale. And to think, a little bit around kind of non alignment, community led conflict resolution, and dissolution as ways of building building solidarity through crisis. And here you see an example and or an extract rather of the score that's published, show performance philosophy. And finally, a really important part of my work has been engaging with migrant activism in different ways. migrants and culture as a collective I've been part of, that's a group of artists and activists thinking and cultural workers kind of thinking about border abolition, and creating borderless futures and the cultural sector. We work coalition aliy with migrant organizations, and migrant social justice groups, to kind of both facilitate conversations around migrants in the cultural sector, but also to imagine the different ways in which kind of border abolition might become a kind of shared project, particularly in

the kinds of political and immigration environments and ecologies that we reside within. So this extract here is part of an ongoing project, which imagines what a cultural New Deal might look like. And, of course, as many the pandemic has really shifted some of the directions of this work. In 2016, we did a big research project, which was a survey that looked at the impact of the hostile environment on cultural workers that really foregrounded the relationship, or the kind of alliance between anti racist and anti colonial work and the ways in which this is a much needed approach to respond to kind of hostile invite Ireland border regimes and and one of the kind of emergence ideas of that within the pandemic has been a document that was drafted over a long period of time with other Migrant Justice organizations around 12 steps for cultural recovery that kind of centers migrants and to people of color within that sort of work. So an ongoing projects also include reading group on abolitionists futures, a campaigning against the so called Brexit Festival, which is kind of coming up in the UK next year. And a kind of migrant resource document that connects existing resources with force in order to center the rights and work of migrant cultural workers in the UK. So I hope this has been a kind of a move a kind of Walker experience. Thank you very much for joining me and for being with me to kind of think across these different dimensions of work. There will be a series of links that accompany this. And I will be back talking a little bit about nonconforming criticism, but also around kind of performance and its provocation in relation to queer and feminist work as part of the kind of final final lectures. Thanks very much.