

Amy Sharrocks + Thames River a conversation

Throughout the recording we hear sounds of Thames splashing and Amy breathing. We also hear motorised boats pass by, aircraft, geese and gusts of wind.

Hello. My name's Amy Sharrocks and I'm swimming in the River Thames, a little bit near High Wycombe.

There's a group of geese coming towards me, about fifteen of them on the other side of the river. I can see a kite high in the sky, its wings outstretched in the distance, flying round in circles.

Splashes. More motor sounds.

The vegetation is lush and green.

At all times we can assemble with the millions of molecules inside us that hold within them memory of gills and goat and tail and myriad other hybrid knowledges and existences that we have shared in, been party to and can imagine our way into.

Heavy breath out.

Swimming in the River here, I am aware of my skin, as this (*laughs*) site of encounter - I can feel all the

forces of the water pushing on me in a way that I can't feel usually, with the air.

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But it helps to see and feel the other forces that are party to our lives. We are hydroscopic creatures: every water molecule in our body reaching out and clinging to the other molecules of water in the world. With every pore of our body this happens... without me making any intention to connect with the world, my body does it anyway. Despite my mind. I am in concert; an assembly. It makes a mockery of the I/eye.

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Our ears are open at all times to the world. Our eyes, we can pull the shutters down, just like that, but our ears are intended, with their shape, to catch all the sounds. To be surprised. Our ears invite the agency of the world in; they circumvent our choice. And I really like that. They are a reminder to keep open to the world. To not focus on yourself. To see if you can sensitize all your thinking with your body and this world.

I think about the inner workings of our ear. The cochlea, this little snail. And the 20 maybe 30,000 supercilia. These little hairs structures, hair cells. Not hairs, of course, but resembling hairs on our heads or the hair-shaped structures of the universe that you sometimes see in pictures by NASA. So, this mirroring of patterns in nature goes on outside and in,

reminding us of the... silliness of boundaries, of attempts to make different or other.

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So, these supercilia, 20-30,000 of them, sensitized to the different wavelengths and resonances in the world. All that extraordinary structure in order to hear every single thing we can. And how many senses in our brain and in our society, then work in order to deafen what we hear, what we know, what we see. What is the point of speaking, if there's no one to hear and to listen. And what is the point of listening, if we then do not act. If we do not pay attention. If we do not care.

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Listening, comes with it the responsibility of acting. In order to pay attention, we need to lean in, to people, beings and the world. When rocks speak and trees speak and people speak and birds speak. In order to be attendant – that word carries the sense of stretching - of stretching towards, but also stretching ourselves thin, making ourselves tender and porous in order to let the world in.

So there is always assembly. We just have to widen who we and what we are assembling with. I came to talk, to offer this conversation with the river. Because sonic work is always in conversation with everything else in the world.

Splashing becomes louder.

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Birds call.

We hear voices from passers-by in dialogue with Amy.

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Amy: Hello!

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Other voices: Hello! Found any treasure?

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Amy: Always! It's the river, right?

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Other voices: Is it cold?

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Amy: It's lovely! It's beautiful.

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Other voices: Be Careful!

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Amy: I will. Thank you.

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*Motor noises become louder, pass by, and subside again.*

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Sounds of Thames splashing, Amy swimming and breathing, geese calling and chatting.

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*Fade to silence*