



A QUARTERLY JOURNAL MADE BY WOMEN

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*meryn.ru*



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ZOE TAMBLING

\*

Emily, people love the logistics of your dog  
It is just this easy, Emily

Garfield, it's Tuesday  
Here we are in the garden

In the car with a coke you have legs  
We both have legs

In the car I crack lobster with the legs of my mothers

Man with hands  
weeps into dogfur

No vessel  
No sheath

This terrible throat is now a boy

*With Amaryllis and the Green-Eyed Girl*

1

Why don't you walk on the shore  
with Amaryllis and the green-eyed girl,  
and the girl's mask—her hair splashed with champagne instead  
of antiseptic—singing German songs?

2

Put me to bed now, with a needle  
for dreams, another for unpleating  
the groin. Put me to bed in the sand,  
with the miniature shells and the grit.

*Painting My Breasts*

Painting my breasts with  
Tulips, like the  
Dreadful things they are.

This bounding old  
Heart held still,  
In a cup, in white hands.

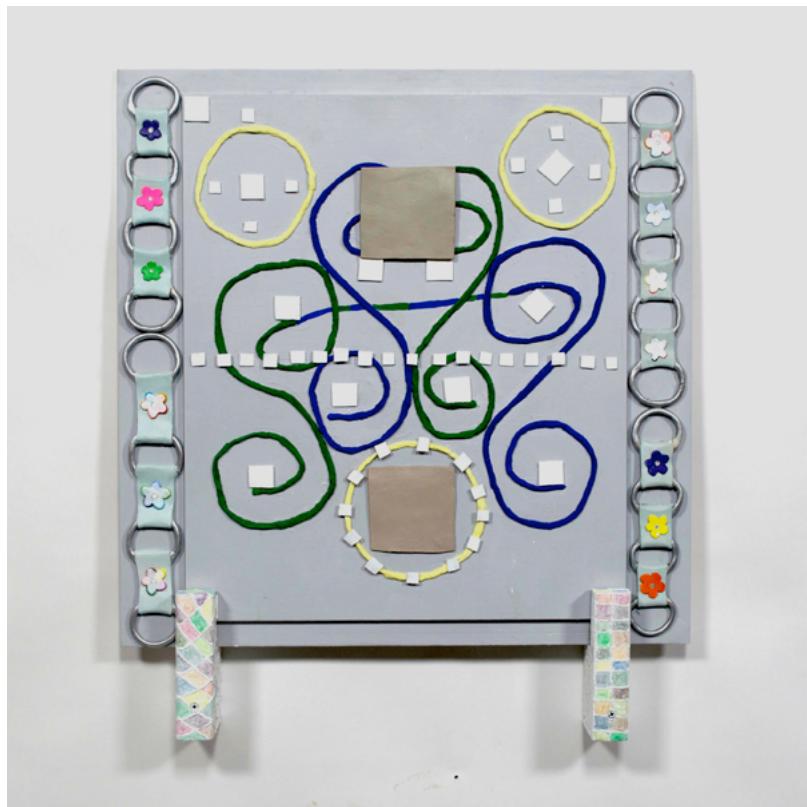
*The City of Bones*

*1 avenue du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy  
75014 Paris*

Your skyscrapers Your carapaces  
Your crowded thoroughfares  
Your alleys Your elegant houses  
Your civic ceremonies  
Your highways and byways  
Your distances Your tenements  
Your dauntless architectural sleep  
Your anonymity  
Your peace Your curiosusness  
Your intersecting femurs  
Your eyeless eyes  
Your ramshackle musters  
Your knucklebones Your teeth  
Your fascination to gawkers  
Your privacy despite them  
Your hands Your mandibles  
Your many white towers  
Your incognito walls Your paths  
Your friendly lonely throng  
Your nondescript beloved multitude

*Blood-Heaven*

This late grace,  
the sun in a grey  
bath, the kiss of light—  
and the goose with  
a pearl in its beak  
walking into the city  
on hot, hushed roads.  
The slaughter will take  
days: it will be  
deemed exquisite.





NUAR ALSADIR

\*

*Sketch 1*

Pagina after pagina in Marlene Dumas' book.  
Is it page in Dutch? Vagina in midnight blue?  
Self-portrait of womb: 'DARK BLACK LONELY  
SPACE', Louise Bourgeois, 'Deep inside my heart'—  
or is it Tracey Emin?—(2009-2010), the empty years.  
What will be born of this splotch of blue, sea horse  
on wheels? How much *beeldenstorm* swims inside me?

*Sketch 54*

Wilson's Plover, distraction displays—  
feigning weakness to draw predatory attention  
to a different stretch of beach, far from nest.  
Self as beach—expanse of stable ground  
emerging from ocean (the unconscious).  
Did I plover last night (broken wing, mock  
brooding) to guard against envy? A kind  
of psychic autocorrect: *Let's go solve where else.*

*31.*

Sadness folds the chair I  
would have sat on—

38.  
LOST TIME

(EROS)

OLIVIA CRONK

\*

in the softest skin stalks you couldn't believe this  
in the sitting in melting snow

When we went to the street they told us to  
there were broken appliances everywhere. Infinitease was closed. The dance hall was  
closed.

Jeannie was wearing one of those clear make-up face masks  
and a lace dress.

I was certainly not going to reveal my own naïveté.

I sat down on the mattress and helped look in the sleeping bag folds for a lighter. Like it was nothing, perfectly ordinary.

This was inside of many summers. This was: what happens when you meet people by bodies of water, sometimes schizophrenic people or people who scare you or people who sleep in a lot of different places and own dogs. Sometimes you work at a restaurant with these people. Sometimes they just show up. Sometimes your friends put too much stock in these people. Sometimes these people are your friends. Sometimes they are arrested at your work. Sometimes these people are your students. Sometimes you think you could have been one of these people, and you understand that the nostalgia is a mix of very offensive misunderstandings of class and style and sex, and that also sometimes it's just what things really are.

I sat on a mattress by the river.

I worried over my unshaven legs: would the effect be cool or would it seem weird to these people?

Is youth a gender?

and then we are walking to the seeing we start something honest at the neck:  
not the pretending kerchief  
not a hemp necklace with glass beads that spell out

something more topaz-choker-collar sleazy fake cameo curly bangs:

a gesture into the seeing a man with a lot of papers spread out at the snack spot where they let Jeannie use the hose

it's a house on the block  
it's a room before you get into the in of the house:

some old blue carpeting  
a big blow-up chicken-lady flopping and lips right into the in of you  
but it's not a doll  
she's saying things  
it talk it talk it talk talk

talk talk

I am now seeing some ankles  
and someone has used bedspread-fringe as freaky little cuffs

You can keep on going in the house  
You can go there every afternoon  
You are setting the Table of Utter-ness

My brown slip has its hem tacked up with safety pins.  
My dishes are maroon with white triangles.  
The house has endless curves.  
Twin skinned weasels are laid upon the card table.

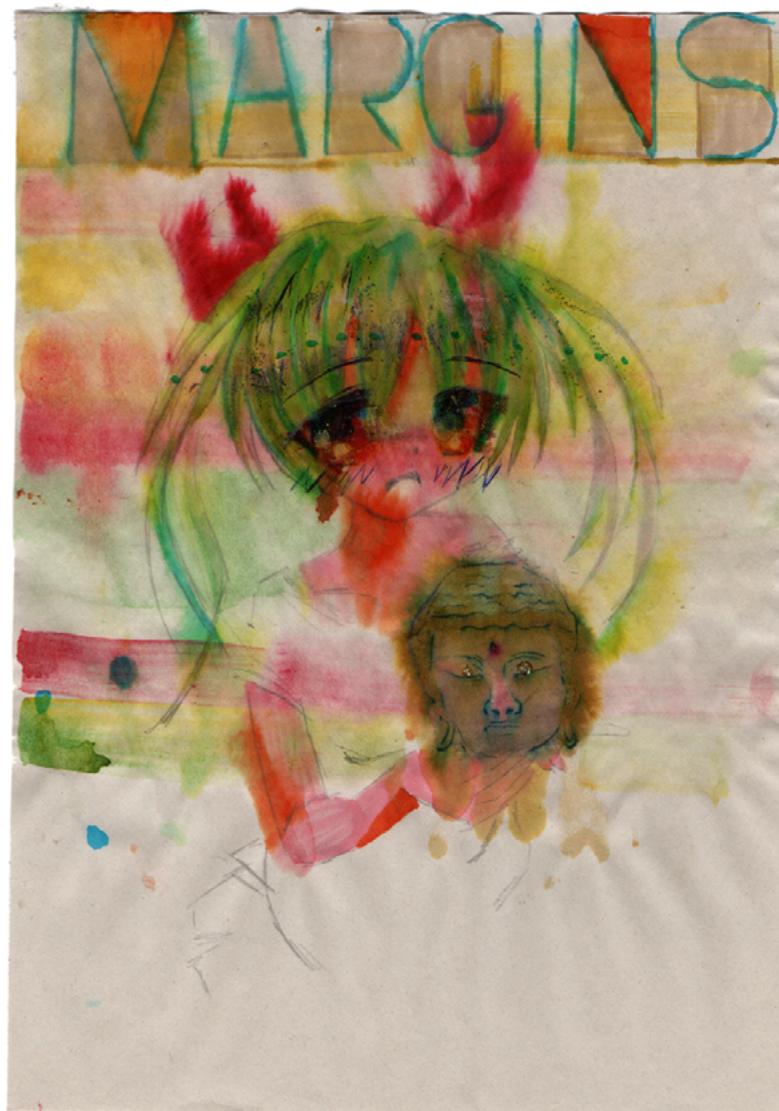
When we sit in the white wicker, small pieces crack off and fall under the furniture.  
The lady said her dog might eat them and would get sick from the paint. We always  
pick them up before we leave, but I despise the feeling of the pieces combed up from  
the daisy-shag-rug and dirt and crumbs all mixed on my hand.

What can I tell you about a crackling wisteria and batik curtains and the moon-hurt terror of trying to remember things?

The people were gone, maybe? Dead? I don't know.  
The home was abandoned, maybe.  
We all went in and took stuff.  
I think it was some sort of favor to the landlord.  
The house smelled like pee and seemed very bad, very sinister.

This is not the same house with the blow-up chicken.







JANE GOLDMAN

\*

*IN THE GARDENS  
WITH JOHNNY WOOLSTANZA*

outside the house is tuning  
the pond is being prepared  
art inside is always unlabeled

the pond is being prepared  
outside the trees are ticketed  
for the return of reg's girl

she will be moved closer  
to the centre of the pond  
will there be carp and water-lily?

johnny uncorks the lawn  
where henry's bronzes  
used to yawn

*LEGEND HAS IT*  
(*HILDAFIT FOR TOASTED HITLERS*)

a phial of less well burnt bone  
fragments and blood-dimmed carpet

fibres taken from the torn bodies  
charcoaled in the cratered garden

of the chancellery eventually  
fell to the hands of a young

undergraduate in chemistry  
at somerville college oxford

researching bactericidal  
gramicidin (an early topical

antibiotic culture  
allowing inorganic

malevolent monovalent  
cations unrestricted travel

through cellular membranes)  
which very suspension—*contra* all

medical wisdom of the time *re*  
gramicidin (external use

only) and of much later *re*  
the high temperature levels

required in rendering offal  
and bone meal safe from that

epizootic new variant  
Creutzfeldt-Jakob—once ingested

formed the foul catalyst by  
which is now afforded what

history so valiantly denied  
a full state funeral the full

global artilleried glory  
of these gun carriage

military honours for  
the führer dead and his new bride

*SNAKE IN THE GRASS*

*for Alaric Hall*

My man was menstrual, had fever dreams  
of carbonizing metal. In scattering I began:  
impure, then piled, twisted, fused,  
quenched in oil and sweeter fluids,  
my long form agent and symbol  
of heavy terror: what it is to be split.

City of Oxford, you forget little enough  
but rather excel in techniques of diversion and cover.  
City, you have renamed Gropecunt and Slaughter streets;  
driven streams to run their own burials;  
with false surgery, you have sealed  
the wide, one-eyed mercy of a lake  
beneath a car park's sweat, the clang of coins.  
Under Christ Church tower,  
under kings of new history,  
the Jewish town lies in pre-Expulsion sleep;  
under that again, nameless bones.

Do not dishonour me. I am not sleeping.  
Slide your eye back into its drowsy basket.  
Are you alive, when grass is cut,  
to the slip of blades, reptile-quick  
to stain, to twine? Such things  
share my nature: whatever is woven,  
whatever heats up, iridescent with force.

Do not shun me. I am not sleeping.  
Glass is the least security. My kind's for re-use,  
willing to coil cold in the earth  
till each deadly resurrection through your changes of nation,  
till your kind hand comes and the smith repairs us.

Slide your eye into the wave and wind of me.  
Forget your wife, if you still have one.  
The two of us decide who's for the taking.  
Bring me to your son, blossoming in his cradle.  
Introduce us. I have a name.  
Man, join us together. There's wisdom in my core.

### DOG OR WOLF

*Lucera bronzes, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*

Dog or wolf.

Verse, or prose.

I choose to sing to the hairless  
who silken my path with their killings,  
my hills and plains being pitted  
with cattle and cities and middens.  
They reek of nerves, arrogant.  
I raise my nose, jubilant.  
We crouch, we loom.

An agglomeration of moons tumbles through my glottis / Mistress / I yawn and  
obey / mooncommands / dawn to musk / night and sight / fall and water / sheep  
and herd / the eye-stalk-chase motor pattern homologue / moonrules Mistress /  
discipline or perish / verse and prose.

Who'll choose to croon to the hairless?  
Who's wounding? Who's sounding? Who's pooling?  
Who reeks of grass, ruminant?  
Who'll rise as noise, ululant?

Mistress / I set up a gentle howling / tomb or toy / and now I am about / wyrd  
or ward / now I am wholly towards / play or prey / ave, vale / which is it to be,  
Huntress?

I hear with ears that point upwards.  
Eagerness valleys my backbone.  
Satisfaction curls over my tail.  
Good lupo; optimum dog.

### DISPOSAL OF A WEAPON

*The sword of Sir Hugh de Morville, one of the four knights  
who killed Thomas Becket at Canterbury, is thought to have  
been given to Carlisle Cathedral. A replica of a twelfth-  
century sword is now on view at Carlisle.*

I had to take it somewhere.  
That was the steel.  
I took it home.  
That was in stone.  
They had to leave it somewhere.  
That was the shell.  
The Church stepped in.  
That was in storm.  
*Steel, stone, shell, storm.*

Another Cathedral. Rage rising:  
crowds towards us, against our hard work,  
Thomas, head split, forcing hearing's gate  
with his loud and bloody treasons. Pray  
how could I, lacking fluent parlance,  
else control them? As clouds address  
my hilly sheep in Northumbria?  
In a tyrant's robed, balconied words?  
With sweets that trade poisons?

Visitors,  
modern, unburied, probing my rests,  
after my doubtless victim's blessing—  
also you thoughtless, yet in secret  
capitally troubled—that is not  
my sword, though something targets your head,  
overhangs the roof, disposed to make  
short gold of your moment of starred blue.

That is not my sword. We are elsewhere.

*Steel, stone, shell, storm.*

I, Hugh de Morville,  
Lord of Knaresborough,  
Honour of Westmorland,  
lineal man stamped down  
man-killer, saint-maker  
by Canterbury history.  
Bless or at least excoriate,  
do not forget, my name







LINDSAY TURNER

\*

*THE NEW FOREST*

and then Sunday we went to see  
the forest by the lake the new forest  
the low forest the after-dinner forest the for-profit forest  
the forest upwards beside the deep dark  
dark forest don't tell me what I'll remember  
or regret later forest we saw  
the forest  
of reminders the forest turned  
to countings mansions exhibitions  
expositions the old floor glorious  
fading in sun the carpets forest  
we went to see in the car growing into our projections forest  
darker the dark strip in the lake the forest projecting an illusion  
forest depth  
projected onto our real depth the lake showing  
the dark the dark forest the forest  
decided the forest  
planted for the futures forest  
that doesn't accrue forest planted to grow  
into what doesn't exist now forest  
of futures forest  
on Sunday getting darker forest deforested  
landing the new forest makes it  
worth it light left now in the forest  
standing up

*LOVE SONG*

If I could never sleep again and was always thirsty  
Would you rescue me  
If the little glimpse of ocean were one day gone  
I would rescue you

*LOVE SONG*

once in a blood moon it isn't about money or power  
it's an actual blood moon too early to get up for  
worn out by everything the colors swell like business—  
arrived at the station for what would we all just really fall down?  
if yes is the answer to any of your questions  
then go in the back where they could give you something  
but you might have to pay for it if yes is the answer  
to all of your questions it must be your fault in the first place



*'THE BRITISH MAINSTREAM POPULIST POEM IS  
A SOVEREIGN STATE ... EVEN "DISSENTING"  
POEMS ARE NORMALIZED THROUGH A VACUITY OF  
LANGUAGE AND EPIPHANIC NARRATIVE'*

*Reading texts by Sandeep Parmar and Juliana Spahr in succession is a stirring experience. 'Not a British Subject: Race and Poetry in the UK', an essay by Parmar published last December in the Los Angeles Review of Books, outlines and interrogates British society's problem with race, and, as a micro example of this, British poetry's problem with race. Spahr's long poem #MISANTHROPOCENE, written with Joshua Clover, is a slap-in-the-face shock look at consumerism, finance and ecology.*

*We asked them to conduct an email exchange in the hope that they would discuss together the things they'd talked about independently—consumption, the dangers of apathy, being on the margins, and how to correct lethargic and damaging ways of thinking and writing. Here, these concerns are manifest in discussion of the differences between poems in the UK and US, state controlled poetry, nationalism and borderlessness, #BROETRY, police and reclamations.*

Dear Juliana,

Two weeks ago, I played a game in which ten people, myself included, were asked to invent an idea that would change the world. It was meant to be funny, but I couldn't understand why. After thirty minutes of 'speed-dating' these with an audience, a winner was chosen. Turns out my idea was vastly unpopular and the winning pitch was a tie between abolishing bicycle helmets and a ten-month costume drama to fill the doldrums of everyday life. I mention this only because my idea was not at all original: I argued for the elimination of national borders and to make the concept of citizenship global. A larger version of the EU for all intents and purposes. Only better. A gradual erosion I hoped of nationalism, hoarding of resources and capital and the elimination of statelessness. I really don't believe such a thing could work, but every time I explained it—again, from scratch—and waved my hands pointing to the origins of citizenry and slavery I watched the punters pull their borders in tighter around their ankles quoting Churchill and declaring their spiritual 'subjecthood' to the Queen of England. But how would it work? They asked. How well does citizenship work now? I should have replied, citing the refugee crisis. A week later the Paris attacks happened. It occurred to me that the game was never meant to be serious because no one wanted change.

Today, I've been reading an essay by Lyndsey Stonebridge, 'Statelessness and the Poetry of the Borderline'. She reads an Oxford-based Palestinian poet Yousif M. Qasmiyah against the psychoanalyst Andre Green's idea of the 'borderline'—not exile, not homeland but something like being stateless. It made me think back to your book, *Everybody's Autonomy: Connective Reading and Collective Identity* (in fact Stonebridge uses also the term 'connective reading') and the potentially liberating examples you offer of anti-lyrical, multiple, polyvocal texts from essentialised national, racial and cultural identities. Stonebridge gives an account of the Oxford Poets and Refugees Project (co-hosted by a University and a charity) that pairs up refugees with established British poets. There's a sense that the structures in place are meant to produce a kind of language—an expression of trauma, exile, metaphors of loss—that disregards the poet's lived experience beyond his statelessness. But the poet, Qasmiyah, resists making meaningful the direction to 'authenticate' his experience by use of linguistic and formal uncertainty. He chooses to express instead the embodied psychic space of the border. While this may not seem revolutionary I expect it upended the largely provincial, geographically fixedness of tradition vs. other—Oxford vs. Refugee. But I wasn't there. Here I'm tempted to draw a loose line between Veronica Forrest-Thomson's 'suspended naturalisation', meaning the resistance of the urge to 'reduce the strangeness' of poetic language or organisation, and the unnaturalised body and mind that can be sovereign in language but not necessarily as 'self'. Perhaps to resist any totalizing meaning to formulate around one's own work—even if the practice of reading is communal—the author must make

the undemocratic step of refusing to be drawn within the reader's borders.

This brings me to your *That Winter the Wolf Came*, which I can't stop reading. 'It's All Good, It's All Fucked' and 'Turnt', the final two sections of the book, are for me where the resistance is at its strongest—and the least lyrical. No doubt the lived experience of the Oakland Commune and a kind of witness (from afar but in incredible detail) of the BP oil spill run throughout the book offering moral ballast. But I was surprised to see how literally the book was being read by certain reviewers—as testimony or witness or simply activist poetry conveying ecological and political facts.

*This poem is true. I have texted I love you and its variations over and over.  
Sometimes I barely knew you.  
But the names are not true.  
This is not a coterie poem.  
Is it a milieu poem?  
Can it be a movement poem?*

(from 'Turnt')

It seemed instead to me that you were moving between several different borders. Authenticity. Form. To name but two. I'm curious about the 'authenticity' of the book. Can you tell me about the book's boundaries?

\*

Dear Sandeep,

I think I played a version of the game you were playing with friends the other day but it was in a casual conversation. We were talking about the pardons that presidents at the end of their second term tend to hand out. We were joking about who Obama might pardon in his last month. Usually presidents pardon a bunch of their friends who have ended up in jail for insider trading and the like. This turned into a discussion about what Obama might yet do before he leaves office, what he could do by presidential fiat in these last few months, what sorts of 'gifts' he could give us if he had any integrity. Most people at the table were saying he should gift us legalized marijuana. By which they meant that he could basically just respect state's rights by taking marijuana off the federal schedule 1 list. (Right now the situation in the US is that various states have legalized marijuana but the federal government has not and so at moments the federal government goes and raids businesses that are legal locally.) I made a joke about how he should in the last week of his office open all the borders.

It was a dumb joke about the hope that so many had that the Obama administration might 'reform' immigration, a hope that has been repeatedly dashed. But I think, and I think this is what you are saying, that if one has to make any change right now that might actually shift and reconfigure the fucked up geo-political situations of our time it would be to eradicate national borders. Or that one act has the potential to change a million things. And without that act, a million other things that we might want might not be able to happen. Or another way of phrasing this: capitalism has been especially wily in taking advantage of the economic disparities that are created because of national borders.

You've hit on something though in your question that I am trying to figure out: the relationship between literature and the state. The specifics of it. Not the vaguenesses of it. This desire to figure this out comes from my current conviction that literature in the US is especially troubled by years of state interference, by state monitoring of culture and also by state recuperation of it. So many writers have been both monitored and recuperated (often at the same time). One way to tell this story is to begin it with the how the US government used the arts as anti-communist propaganda in the Cold War. And it gets way more complicated and twisted with the particular attention that was given by the FBI to Black art forms and their role in the potential popular revolution that was the 60s and 70s, a revolution that was suppressed in many different ways, among them COINTELPRO. And so I read that article by Stonebridge last night with interest. And I bristled against parts of it. I really really want a poetry that is not just stateless or borderline but is anti-state, but I do not think that poetry as a whole 'is a practice that calls for the abandonment of sovereignty'. Yet I found other parts of it super helpful. Mainly, it handed me a different Auden. I had never thought of Auden as being a poet who gives us a geopolitical map of contracting and expanding states. I'm not sure I'm convinced but I am going to reread him and think about this more. I was interested too in the Oxford poet and the refugee poet program but I can't tell what I think about it. I want to ask a million questions about it. I might not be able to understand it without understanding the very different way that literature in the UK interacts with the state. But I will say that I cannot imagine a US version, a program say where a Harvard poet would be paired with a refugee poet. And if this program did come into existence, I would presume there was State Department money behind it. Or I rarely see anything in literature that is international that does not in some way involve the State Department. Which does not necessarily discount it, but it is something to be hesitant about. Or it takes a number of rainy Sundays to get through all the hits that one gets when one enters the word 'poet' into the diplomatic cables that have been released by wikileaks. But if one did this, what would become quickly clear is that the state is concerned with two things: the compliance of various US writers as they send them abroad to go read and otherwise build ties with the intelligentsia of nations of interest and the possible threat that the poets of these same nations might represent to the US. So and so is a

revolutionary poet they notice. So and so might be able to induce a riot. So and so read an anti-American poem. Interestingly in a sort of Stonebridge way, they also notice the emerging geopolitical alliances that seem to show up in the poems of these possibly riot-inducing revolutionary poets. The diplomatic cables seem to be fairly convinced that the poem is often used as a sort of bellwether of new relationships between nations. It is also telling to compare the list of poets that show up in wikileaks and the list of poets that show up in any sort of international programming, in scholarly studies of international or transnational literature. There is not much overlap. The academy for sure does not teach or write about the possible riot-inducing revolutionary poets of these other nations. Does not even mention them. What to do with this I do not know.

When the Oxford poet and refugee poet work together, can they write a border destroying riot into existence? Or does the Oxford poet provide the refugee poet an example of a how in Oxford, poetry is not written for the riot?

In terms of borders in my work... Ugh. I become more and more convinced that literature is nothing but national. And yet I keep writing it. I think this is counter to what one is supposed to do. Or on twitter (about a press that I'm a part of): 'IF POETRY IS USELESS THEN WHY WRITE & RUN A POETRY PRESS. TO MARKET YR REVOLUTIONARY POET BRAND NAME? #BROENTRY.' It is hard to get nuance on twitter and there a million ways to answer this question (among them the claim that poetry might be a minor part of somewhat revolutionary moments and there are a lot of reasons to try to understand how the state often recuperates literature as part of the counter-insurgency if one is committed to this relationship). And I've never been devoted to a politics of refusal or purity. I seem to write in a sort of improvisational form that our culture calls poetry more often than it calls it prose. I'll keep doing it probably despite being nervous about its relationship to the state because there is no meaningful way to opt out of these relationships. I will also keep eating food despite being nervous about how the green revolution is destroying the environment. And I will also keep flying on airplanes despite... I wish I had meaningful choices. But until the borders go down (aka until there is no more capitalism), I don't. But one of my interests in migrating birds, which seem to show up in my work more and more, is that they have got no interest in the Peace of Westphalia, no respect for its legacies. And I wanted in *That Winter the Wolf Came* to try to suggest that these moments of resistance that were happening outside my door not be seen as isolated from say the resistance in Gezi Park. Not that they were necessarily the same. But that there is right now a flickering global possibility. Can we call it into existence? Probably it can't be called into existence through poetry. Or prose. Even as if it were to happen, poetry might be a part of it or show up in close proximity to it. But a poem can notice it if nothing else.

And I think I want, in conclusion, to ask you maybe something similar. Something about Enoch Powell and the river of blood and his being a poet and the tradition and the back and forth of tradition in *Eidolon*. And I wanted to think about Helen of, as you put it, 'no known address / of no known nationality / refugee of no known conflict / stateless.' About Whitman too.

\*

Dear Juliana,

The scenario of state sponsorship, surveillance and promotion/dissemination of certain compliant poets internationally—do such things exist in Britain? I honestly don't know. While I'm aware that the US State Department had in the past funded international literature ventures, there are no rumored links in the UK between creative writing programs and the intelligence services, for example. However, maybe there's a fair comparison to be made to the British Council (originally known as the 'British Committee for Relations with Other Countries') which was founded, unsurprisingly, in the 1930s. The BC website cites a 1940-41 report of its aims leading to 'a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy may be and from whatever political conviction it may spring.' In other words, they can do no wrong. What a bizarre statement to still stick by in 2015. The soft diplomacy of language teaching and the spreading of British arts and culture may have inspired jurisdictional tolerance in its colonial subjects at a time when Britain's empire was crumbling around its ears—but what relevance can it have now? These days the British Council's remit seems much larger—much more publically focused on education and mindfully 'transparent' perhaps than its US equivalents. The BBC World Service (paid for by license fees) is being allowed to expand after a recent spending review by the Conservative government (one that saw further heinous cuts to public services and welfare for society's most vulnerable) infused it with extra cash for arts and culture programming in the Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Middle East, Russia and North Korea. To the tune of almost £300 million over 5 years. It sounds plainly obvious to say that arts and culture budgets should not be linked to defense spending. But clearly in both cases the state has a specific view (backed by unlimited resources) of what national culture is and how it is best exported and exploited for 'a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy'. A war we're losing in the Middle East. As for the academy and its unwillingness to teach revolutionary poets—I face more resistance from politically apathetic, disengaged students than I would from the University on any level. As a readership, we've drawn such a closed boundary around meaning and truth and communication that it is nearly impossible to disrupt, even within the walls of the classroom. The British mainstream populist poem is a sovereign state—in a Stonebridge way—and its power is wholly undemocratic. It

requires nothing from the reader but an unquestioning appreciation akin to whole families lining up on the Mall waving a miniature flag at the Queen's carriage. Even 'dissenting' poems are normalized through a vacuity of language and epiphanic narrative like Kate Tempest's 'Ballad of a Hero', which is, plainly, dreadfully simplistic. This sort of poem gives us absolutely nowhere to go, not even into the (sometimes ethically dubious) joy of linguistic play. I'm thinking of your work in *Everybody's Autonomy* and know how much you've contributed to questions about communal reading and its wider implications.

Stonebridge writes: 'The most potent threat the refugee carries with her is that of her own statelessness – the negative image of citizenship.' Much has already been said about citizenship and the negative image of the refugee. But perhaps we can introduce into our question a third angle—or a bridge—between literature and its relationship to the state: the body. And think about how the body makes fragile the nation state by its presence. By the threat it poses to 'fantasies of sovereignty' with its 'statelessness' of body and mind. I felt this at work in 'Brent Crude' from *That Winter the Wolf Came*: 'This is a joke about being a middle aged body, / one whose real medical and financial needs are met variably, some more / or less doing ok and some not doing ok at all.' And elsewhere in 'Tradition'—that remarkable rejection and accrual of otherness that denatures authenticity. Its interesting to me that there's a correlation for you between breaking down principles of generic form and the mandates of the state.

I don't know if poetry can be 'anti-state' without being in some ways stateless. But since statelessness implies invisibility I wonder what this means for the poetic subject. Internationalism is often presented as an antidote to nationalist literatures—but often shore up boundaries that are meaningless from the inside of a country (who's British? we worry about this here more than we should). I'm reminded of Nancy Cunard's archive, in which there's this crazy 1934 poem riffing on the (problematic) anthropologist Bernelot Moens' idea of a 'Supra-Nation': a floating cruise ship that would by sailing freely across borders conquer all forms of prejudice. This was his (and Nancy's) hope for the future's 'perfect' civilized man.

But on to your question about Enoch Powell. When I was writing *Eidolon* I was in the Reverend Hugh Stewart's archive at the University Library researching for my biography of Hope Mirrlees. And there he was! Hugh Stewart was the husband of Jessie Stewart, the pupil of the classicist Jane Ellen Harrison at Newnham College, and as it happens, a tutor of Powell's. There it was: a letter from Enoch Powell to the good Reverend. Enoch, a poet, a student of classics, was translating a bit of Aristotle and confirming it with his tutor. Enoch, who would populate my mother's nightmares, a newly immigrated child living near Wolverhampton in the 1960s. I wonder if in the sovereignty and the purity of the individual there is a place for family, for fear and quietness and shame. And intimacy. It was Jessie Stewart that drove Eliot

to Little Gidding—that rural road to equivocal meaning and essential truth. Back to Stonebridge: as you'll know, Auden excluded 'September 1, 1939' from future editions of his work. Why? Because he didn't believe we must love or die after all. For me, Auden is the start of the ethical breakdown of British poetry. He is irretrievable from his Spanish Civil War poems and the irony injected into his voice by distance disturbed a century. But perhaps we ought to be more grateful that Larkin or Auden is no advertisement for the humanity of British foreign policy. I wonder what you make of British poetry now—what travels, what's interesting to you. If it still feels rather parochial?

To change tack: I admired your intense and comprehensive study of the MFA program in the US and the 'Mainly White Room' (MWR) of readings, populaces of literary present, somewhat in reply to Mark McGurl and his study of the academicization of creative writing. Last weekend I was at the Times of India Literature Festival in Mumbai and for the first time in my life I read to an audience made up entirely of Indians. One would expect that my diatribes against the homogenization of the white lyric space—of confessionalism that is mandated exotic by Western audiences hungry for cultural difference—would go over well. But no. They seemed entirely puzzled by my post-colonial grief. I felt I was baring some wound they could not diagnose, had never seen, never even countenanced a cure for. So I read my lyric poems about immigration and Punjab. I felt no better. I felt placed. James Wood writes in his London Review of Books article 'On Not Going Home' (Feb 20, 2014): 'Herodotus says that the Scythians were hard to defeat because they had no cities or settled forts: "they carry their houses with them and shoot with bows from horseback ... their dwellings are on their wagons. How then can they fail to be invincible and inaccessible for others?"' To have a home is to become vulnerable. Not just to the attacks of others, but to our own adventures in alienation.' For me, Helen was a vehicle to displace not just the British isolated lyric subject or poetic authority or the 'I' but racial and national states in my own head that are British, American, Indian and more. Places that I felt I'm not at home in. I carry both my passports with me all the time out of habit but, I suppose, because I don't want to belong to any one place. This is why I chose Helen as a subject. Helen's plurality (Whitmanesque) has an industrial pitch to it—a spectrality that informs as it critiques. About the shadows of things, I suppose.

But you know all this, so clearly. I've enjoyed revisiting your collection *Response* in these past weeks writing to you:

*how to tell without violating?  
how to approach mass though patterns  
as history?  
as opportunity?  
as truth?*

as art?

*the needles in coke bottles suddenly all over the nation  
the sudden realization of being a Satanist  
or a victim or a stalker of your self or an alien  
collaborator or an artist or a poet*

And then this:

*the margin declares*

*[it is impossible to speak about something*

*it is only possible to speak beside it*

My final question is something to do with embodied language, violation from the margins and communal narratives. This recurs through so much of your work, it seems to me, and feels relevant here to our conversation about the state and the stateless.

\*

Dear Sandeep,

I don't know where to start. And to make matters more confused about where to start I just read your piece in *The Los Angeles Review of Books* about race and poetry and had a lot of thoughts about it. It's super good. One small slightly related story... in 2003 I saw a book by Deborah Richards through production on Subpress, a press that I co-edit. I don't know her passport but she has lived in London for some time and is black. She had come over to the US, maybe to study, and I met her through Jena Osman. I love the book. She moved back to London shortly after it was published so it didn't circulate as much as it should have in the US (books still circulate here through readings and social relationships). Sometimes she stops by when she is travelling in the area and I am always like are you still a poet? still writing? And she is like I could never be a poet in Britain; I could never be taken seriously. I thought about this when I was reading your *LARB* piece. She feels it is so impossible. I miss her writing.

But maybe I should start with the question about what and how British poetry travels to the US. Because it might overlap some of the other issues here.

There is what travels institutionally. Anyone who gets a degree in English in the US is likely to have had at least half the books they've been assigned be British. The tradition of American literature as it is told in English departments is an English tradition that eventually becomes an American one. This is starting to change a little. But still where I teach the English department offers four surveys: two in English Literature and two in American literature. Each student is required to take three to get a major.

But outside of this, there is a long relationship between what I think is some form of Cambridge/Sussex school and US experimental-y scenes. I think I have been arguing with Keston Sutherland since we were in our twenties. We stopped for a while and maybe now have picked it up again? I think we argue in the way that two people who are on the same side argue, it's all an argument about the details. Prynne used to do this American tour every year. He may still do it for all I know. So he would show up and I think he is taken seriously here as a poet as a result of those readings and those visits also brought with them work by his students and those in that circle. From these socialities, there are a bunch of poet friends who I think of doing a parallel sort of writing in Britain. I am a huge Sean Bonney fan right now. I love too that Andrea Brady *Wildfire* book (She is a UK writer now? Is that true?). I've been interested in what I have been able to find from Nat Raha also. Verity Spott's jokes from the inside about Marxist poetries make me laugh. I want to just list friends here too. Hi Sophie Robinson! Hi Amy De'Ath! Hi Francesca Lisette! Hi Danny Hayward! Hi Jennifer Cooke! etc.

Then the Black British poets and the work that came out of the Caribbean Artists Movement also feel crucial to me, although I do not have social ties to them and have not seen them read regularly in the US. I have often answered that who is your favorite writer question with the name of Kamau Brathwaite. In the US he is considered more of a Caribbean writer. Some other names that you mention too... I also have been long interested in David Marriott's work. Although in the US he is more known as a critic (and his work has been even more important lately because of the conversation about anti-blackness that is one result of the various protests that might be grouped under the term Black Lives Matter). I also find his poetry under recognized but I can never tell if he doesn't travel as a poet in the US by choice or not. Like he doesn't publish poetry that often and his poetry books are on British presses (and it remains strangely hard to get physical books across national boundaries). I see him around now and then. I wish I saw his poetry around more.

These are poetries that I read because I read poetry because I am a poet. The English tradition that I was taught in school was different than this. That is more Auden and Woolf and maybe Eliot (depending on how he gets counted) and Hughes, sometimes.

Heaney too. The US MFA has traditionally had a really close relationship with a number of Irish poets.

That said, British literature has never felt parochial to me. It has felt mainly the opposite. Like overwhelmingly literate. I am regularly reading British literature and also Commonwealth literature and feeling intimidated by its range of reference. Reading it with an anxiety that I am missing some metrical structure or other sort of formalism that everyone else is getting. Not to mention my endless attempts at moments to figure out what the fuck Prynne is trying to say in whatever poem. And maybe this is part of my interest in it? I feel the differences in the US and UK educational system in all sorts of ways. I feel it really dramatically in your work, for instance. I think if someone had showed me your work and I didn't know anything about who wrote it I would have guessed someone who had been through some sort of UK influenced educational system. I sometimes think of this as the difference between the literatures of the Pacific (mainly US influenced educational system) and Atlantic (mainly UK influenced educational system). But that is too simple. There is a story that I've heard others tell about the literature written on the island of Samoa: that there is a difference between the literature that comes out of the half of the island that is the Independent State of Samoa (which because it was a colony of New Zealand had a UK influenced educational/literary tradition) and the literature of the half that is American Samoa (which had a US influenced educational/literary tradition). I don't know enough about Samoa to know the extent of the truth of this but I've always been interested in it.

But I think too about how hard is to separate this talk about what we read and why we read it from the sort of talk we have been having about the state and its interest in literature. I mean I've started talking about a form of literary nationalism. And yes, I went into iambic pentameter in that poem because it is the meter of the (English) tradition. Or the meter of the state. In the 90s there was this 'New Formalism' movement in the US and a bunch of poets went back and wrote in the forms of the previous centuries and called it radical. It was against the official verse culture of free verse. But often people associated with theorizing that moment would say things about iambic pentameter as being not the equivalent of the state but that it was the equivalent of the beating of the heart. Or that it was 'natural'. This always annoyed me. Although I should also say that I feel so badly trained in meter, despite all those English literature survey courses, that I feel shame about the wooden meter of that poem and I would never read it to a bunch of people with UK educations. Ha.

To move from there to this international festival question... Ugh. I always feel the most confused about what I am doing when reading as the American writer at something more international. I have started asking people where the money comes

from when I'm asked to read internationally. (Mainly because I do not want to read on State Department soft diplomacy money if I can avoid it; I did it once not knowing what I was doing.) But not sure that helps me understand it. Or I felt a related empathy with your story, even as I would have to tell it differently. I remember leaving one of these international events in Scandinavia once and flying to London and getting off the plane and being dropped off at a pub where a reading had just finished and feeling relief. Here were a bunch of drunks arguing about poetry and I was no longer the American writer as much. Or they got the uncomfortable nature of imposed national identity. This makes me wonder also about those moments when poetry has counter-national moments. Or how to value those. I think you are calling these communal narratives.



*'I'VE NEVER BEEN DEVOTED TO A POLITICS OF  
REFUSAL OR PURITY'*

Maybe this is my last question... I recently taught a one day seminar that I called 'Poetry and the Police: Is a Resistant and/or Revolution-aligned Literature Possible? Could We Create One Together? Would We Even Want To? If We Did, What Would We Do?'. We read three works: Elisée Reclus's 'Art and the People', the Situationist Manifesto, '17 May 1960' (I call it the UNESCO one), and George Mason Murphy's 'For a Revolutionary Culture'. I had trouble, once I started to think about what to teach, finding statements about the revolutionary potential of culture that were not either state Communist and/or nationalist, even if liberatory nationalist. So I ended up with these three examples. At the end I tried to talk about what sorts of ways we could

create alternatives to this moment in which we find ourselves, this moment when, as you put it, arts and culture budgets are linked to defense spending. And we couldn't answer it. It wasn't like I had a great answer. My only thought was something like a sort of Paris Commune influenced series of decentralized talks. I want, though, to have this question also be one that is, as the Commune was, less nationalist. Can you answer this question? Can you imagine something? I mean we keep touching on some examples. I'd see the CAM as one possible example. And the parallels in the US have been a whole series of culturalist movements that happen at the same time (but then either get recuperated or fail from lack of support). But I feel like trying to answer this question feels crucial. And I'd like to think about how to answer it in a counter-national context.

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Dear Juliana,

I've never heard of Deborah Richards. But I'm going to find her book. Maybe this is some kind of unhealthy fantasy but I wonder if there are many voices like hers that Britain lost by never acknowledging or allowing them to exist. Black British novelists aren't hostage to coteries in the way that UK poets of color are—and because the social circuitry of poetry is both wildly unpredictable and depressingly predictable (as you suggest, too, nationally never mind internationally) books that can't be placed within the existing framework of (spoken word/performance or heavily 'othered' mainstream lyric) Black British poetry sink. Probably this is why poets of color over here are so unconsciously or consciously savvy about how they speak about themselves to their white audiences. Within a tired orientalist discourse. Mentally and aesthetically lazy. A recent Observer round-up of 2015 best poetry used the phrase 'oriental poise' to describe Sarah Howe's book, 'Indian wisdom' for Carole Satyamurti's Mahabharata and 'militant' as a descriptor for Rankine's Citizen. Well that's all the stereotypes trotted out. Shameless and pathetic ignorance.

What was really odd...an aside...was watching a British Council-funded British-Indian poet recite his English translation of the Ramayana to an Indian audience in Mumbai. The audience was pretty complacent and apolitical about the whole thing—maybe even a little bit amused by the idea that their mythical narratives had been repurposed through the lens of internalized British exoticism and repeated back to them. Not like when the fin-de-siècle Anglo-Indians translated Sanskrit texts written by mystic 'Hindoostanis' into bright, British rhyming verse replete with exclamation marks and capitalized abstract nouns, no...a real Indian, or British Indian, that walking paradox of post-Empire. I wondered what the British Council were thinking. Maybe they thought this was progress on sending the usual parochial British lyric white

poet from the Empire's central casting agency? The Ramayana is—according to my parents' childhoods in India at least—a real life thing not a 'dead myth' but embedded everywhere in public and private life, national identity (and, worryingly, recent anti-secularism)—even if just performed annually by traveling troupes or remade tirelessly as telenovela style TV drama (do these exist any more, I wonder? Maybe I'm just orientalizing now). Like the Mahabharata perhaps—my friend Karthika Nair has just written an amazing revisionist unearthing of its lost female voices called Until the Lions—I'm interested in who claims ownership of these kinds of stories and voices more and more within the state-sponsored globalizing (and nationalizing) of poetry. But also in how little we as writers resist replicating these spurious narratives and networks through our work! 'I could never be taken seriously'...god, what does this mean? It must be that your friend never felt she could accurately speak for herself, even (or perhaps especially) if that meant being many disjunctive, unassimilable, things. Britain really must develop a mentally agile enough audience to allow poets to be unplaced. I'm sure this is a problem in the States, too.

To offer a comparison—and this is tough because I've lived and worked in both countries so my sense of things is contaminated—I suspect that the poets you mention are mostly unknown to your average British poetry audience, who'd be much more likely to be society-members, to know mainstream poets, prize-winning poets, festival habitués, Guardian poets. And you've hit the nail on the head with English Literature degrees in the US vs. the UK—in the UK you could graduate with a BA in English and never read an American writer. But then again, we can get away with teaching 20th-century American Poetry without having any poets of color on the syllabus. Our model of English isn't adaptable to the contemporary and that's perceived as a strength. And we can ignore the 'Anglophone' world, who is by definition only echoing the heart, the (colonial) source, of English.

Perhaps this leads me naturally onto your point about Cambridge, where I lived at a few junctures, most recently within the College system teaching and researching as a fellow. I only mention this because it situates me there and it's impossible to get to know Cambridge from the outside—and I can have no real claims to be on the inside with the temporary status I was afforded. At Cambridge one is acutely aware of belonging and access at every moment of the day: breakfast, lunch, dinner—it's a cliché but one that holds. The College grounds, the University Library, the common rooms, the High Tables. I spent four years researching and editing the poetry of Hope Mirrlees at Newnham College and had to be specially invited into the Senior Common Room to gaze at Jane Ellen Harrison's portrait (she was Mirrlees's lover, and is portrayed beautifully by Augustus John) because I was a person of indeterminate status: honorary temporary member, not fellow, not student. It's the sort of place where at any moment (like in A Room... the Beadle will rock up to ask for your papers and

you have to answer them graciously). These strong links between the US and UK, the Cambridge/Sussex ‘avant-gardes’ (cue problematic poetic catch-all), and the Prynne readings—they are historically the most open channels in post-war poetry, save the short-lived interference of the Beats in 1960s British poetry and the New York School (a ‘talky’ legacy that has reappeared, weirdly, with urban millennial Faber poets). The likes of Keith Tuma, John Wilkinson, the magnificent Romana Huk and to an extent Rachel Blau Duplessis, they keep an eye out over the Atlantic for the interesting things. British poetry otherwise is actually pretty parochial: it may be ‘learned’ but it’s faux intelligence predicated on speaking from the center of the Empire and mimicking the same lyric niceties that have been in currency since the 18th Century. Marriott’s an anomaly in Britain. And yes a really necessary reader of black masculinities and Fanon, etc. Keep fighting with Keston! Sean Bonney is an interesting voice (I think he’s in Berlin now?). Yes, Andrea is a British poet these days and a very recent ally in the poetry & race debates forged by UK poets of color (though, admittedly, not by the avant-garde). If I’m literary in my work, it’s the well-read anger of the marginalized UK poet of color that has made me so. That has made me retreat into books (where I cannot be judged) away from the English departments who relegate us to minor courses and stare blankly when we try to get our way onto Modernist Literature. Iambic pentameter is only ‘natural’ to nationalized/naturalized ears. Give me the great hexameters any day. The comfort of the ancients is that their laws no longer hold us. Like Walcott’s famous line from ‘Sea Grapes’: the classics can console but not enough. There’s strength in this ambiguity for me. For the neo-formalist’s heartbeat we have the breath—which takes us back to embodiment, the body and the state. And how that tension operates in your work.

Onto your final point, which is exactly what I’m wondering about now. British poetry (and maybe US poetry, you tell me) is too satisfied with itself to change. Imitation and bland re-iteration happens aesthetically across the avant-garde and the mainstream as does a very nationalist discussion about poetry (there are few truly ‘international’ poetry presses—or good presses that publish international poets and poetry in translation, Arc Publications here one of the very few). If an American poet (or Palestinian poet, or Pakistani poet or New Zealand poet) is published by Carcanet or Bloodaxe it’s a matter of editorial taste and because of a series of networks and often has little to do with the work as a part of a ‘national literature’ at its ‘origin’. Perhaps a random model than state sponsorship is fairer and better. It’s preferable to the UK bulk exporting Heaney, Hughes and Larkin like jars of stilton stamped with the Royal license. But it’s also small-scale and myopic and, at times, tokenist.

CAM is an interesting example—there’s a wonderful essay coming out in the next issue of *The Wolf*, a magazine I have a hand in—by the poet Christian Campbell about CAM and its legacy. Personally, I feel Black British poets today (another catch-

all term for Afro-Caribbean and Indian descended, which is problematic given the relationships between these UK immigrant groups in the 1960s) lack a strong political sense of their national identity. The rhetoric of multiculturalism and the prosperity of London (where so much poetry is based, unfortunately) is an antidote to real criticism. As an aside, my partner the poet James Byrne was invited to Buckingham Palace along with almost 200 other UK poets to thank them for their contribution to poetry. The event involved champagne and probably canapés and curtseying before her Majesty and her husband. Friends went along and curtseyed and that’s fine—my husband refused to bow to the figurehead of what is a bloody legacy of Empire. I was most surprised to see lots of Black British poets (some from the former colonies) go along, having been invited by the UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy. Ancestral loyalties and common sense prevent me from ever accepting anything tied to the monarchy and, by extension into the bloody past, the British Raj. Of course the refuseniks (oh that word) were vilified or ignored and the champagne poured on. I’m aware Kenneth Goldsmith was invited to the White House—pre-controversy—but these kinds of links have to be abolished surely if we’re to have any kind of intellectual integrity? It’s a difficult conversation for Britain. Where’s the anti-state poetry in the UK? Sam Riviere’s anti-austerity poems? Niall McDevitt’s anti-Tory haikus (called FUCKUS)? I worry when supposedly anti-state, anti-traditional ideas are subsumed by the state as acceptable alternative narratives—like, again, Kate Tempest’s simplistic dissent or even Duffy’s work about the first world war.

Your seminar sounds brilliant. I know the ‘Situationist Manifesto’ and the Murphy but not the others. If I weren’t on an airplane flying to California this minute I’d look the rest up—I will do so when I land. But my sense is that there’s no big answer. Or you’ve already hit on the answer really, which is un-institutionalized, unstructured friendships. Poets make friends for the strangest reasons except the best one: which is a real love of the work and that (and reading broadly deliberately and with various hungry directions) is the only solution. I owe a tremendous debt to my poet friends old and new who deliberately read widely like it’s going out of fashion. And James who co-translated with Ko Ko Thett a Contemporary Burmese poetry anthology into English, *Bones Will Crow*, among other things. The poems redefine ‘political poetry’ in an era of state censorship. These are some of my best teachers and the border-busting antidote to lazy nationalized/naturalized practices of reading and writing. But, practically speaking, I co-direct my university’s international poetry center—and I struggle daily with the overlaps between globalization, nation, consumption, tradition and capital as they relate to education and poetic practice in a national environment that is increasingly hostile to the humanities. I have no answers.

James wrote recently in an essay for *World Literature Today* about travel and writing: ‘...the nomadic condition travels backwards as well as forwards, perhaps also

sideways and always burrows into the earth itself. With each and every direction taken the poet might arrive, quite organically, at an ethical crossroads.<sup>3</sup> I think one has to move to know what ethics is. I don't mean across state or national boundaries necessarily—but an ethical poetics can't be passive and requires an active subject. I am lucky: in 37 years I've had 39 home addresses and I carry both my passports (US and UK) in my handbag always; I'm never at home. I'm privileged—all my moving is a choice, more or less, and that I've always been protected by the State. But back to the solution—we need to work against the agendas of state-sponsored cultural agencies, festivals, publishers, nationalist discourses about literatures, and coteries founded on sameness. I like communal practices but I distrust their assurances and their comforts. What do you think about deconstructing models of cultural citizenship (to come full circle) and advocating and instigating instead a truly international conversation of varied and chaotic reading and listening at the 'ethical crossroads'? Coupled with rigorous and varied critical conversations that are currently impossible under the order of coterie, market, publisher, national literature? If the legal citizenship model relies on non-citizens, too, historically then how do we begin to think about the ethics of cultural citizenship? On that note, your work as a poet and publisher—it's a model for dialogue and generosity we don't adopt often enough in the UK. I wonder why that is.

This is an unending conversation. But it has to end, for now. Let this not be the beginning of silence! It's been an absolute pleasure to talk with you. Your work has enriched me for so long. Thank you.

\*

Dear Sandeep,

I feel we have opened up too many strings to tie this thing together and yet we are running out of time and at this point we might be writing some rambling novella length of an interview. How did this happen?

But before I sign off, I want to go back to something I said earlier: the comment about how in the US, I rarely see anything international in literature that does not have the State Department behind it. I'll stand by parts of this statement. Suzanne Nossel, executive director of PEN American, has served as deputy assistant secretary of state for International Organizations at the U.S. Department of State. Henry Bienen, the recently appointed President of the Poetry Foundation, has served as a consultant to the State Department, the National Security Council, the Agency for International Development, the CIA, the World Bank, and Boeing. At moments in its long history the Ford Foundation has functioned as the private wing of the State Department there has been so much staff overlap and Darren Walker, the current president of the Ford

Foundation, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (a pro-globalization and free trade not-for-profit). The State Department funds the International Writing Program at the U of Iowa. I could continue listing but not sure that is necessary. Or nothing is more international than a nation state (that is sort of where that Pascale Casanova book *World Republic of Letters* leaves us).

But I wanted to go back there because I also think that it is probably crucial to reclaim literature from these machinations. And that reclaiming is probably going to have to take some form of understanding them as best as we can. But if literature does have any possible meaningful resonance in the world (and I'm still a bit 'if' about this), it is probably going to require a conversation that is not just national. And so I've been grateful to be able to talk with you at such length. I sometimes feel I can't understand anything until I've said a billion dumb things about it and you've been very tolerant even as I also feel on this issue I'm not even near the billion dumb things I need to think in order to understand anything. I wish we could sit down for a week and make a bunch of charts and try to understand all this with a team of writers from other locations also. And I would like the location for this to be warm and for there to be a beach and I also want Heriberto Yepez and Mark McMorris and Sarah Brouillette and also Stephanie Young (who works with me in trying to write about some of this stuff within the US) to be there. All of these are people from whom I've learned a lot as I try to understand this stuff. Although they are just the beginnings of who I want there.

*eviction note to the squatting evangelist*

today I woke  
to find you squatting in my mouth again

so I shut you in, for fear  
you'd come pouring out:

(at times I must be  
a tactical mute)

your seven holy tongues aflame  
with all the ignorant harmonies of praise

giddily drunk-driving  
the leveller you call 'grace'

what is pain but deficiency? you burp,  
gleefully stapling a book to my head

I had to freeze my body too, in case  
you started to sway through me;

sashayed by the Spirit, your varicose hands  
raised, lids-half glued in sham ecstasy. You are far off,

else-time, filling your bed with God,  
and demons to keep Him jealous

Meanwhile, we scratch on in your upended pouch,  
but self-archaeology in the mud tracks

is like picking out the choicest bits of sick, while  
our unwatered needs roar like Gog and Magog

Most days, I try and drown you out,  
with frequencies of the hopeful, meantime world

*lovers 'n' cavers*

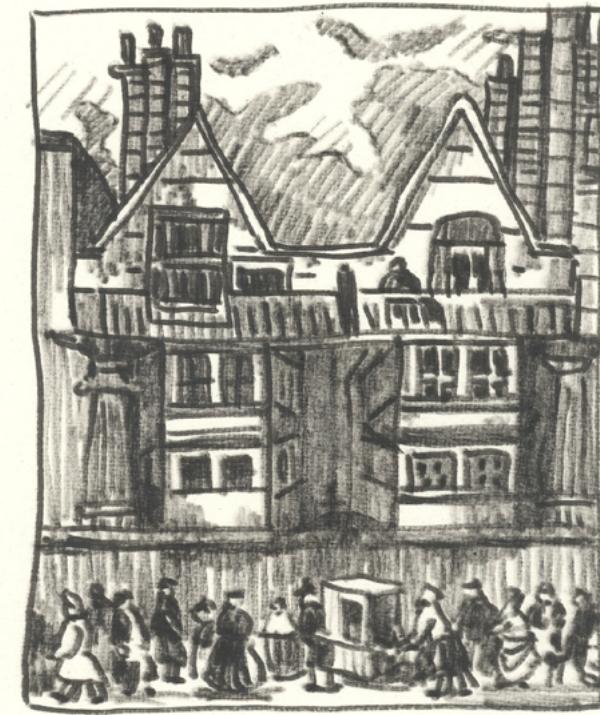
it can't be left to ears to live a life for  
you should have told that woman with  
a capelet of silver hair, a  
slate in the rain that she was beauty, o  
the tense of commuters  
is past conditional  
they should have... past-ish, they  
won't ever take a knife to theyself  
t'slit into kindness, just sous-skin  
for un-incised kindness will fester  
fickle kiss of unripe gooseberry  
at the end of the world you will be called to account  
for the acidity of your stomach

*roral*

too much time brings on afternoon shakes  
or youth disorder, as proto-grandmother  
I deadheading azalea forests,  
misspelt and succulent in the rain  
huckle, suckle  
-ling sap, suck,  
roast me on a spit  
or at least latter my mouth hole

*William Morris*

o sweet fiscal, azalea banks or  
blueberry gorge  
the afternoon racists mow their lawns  
everything in a house should be useful  
or beautiful, suite England  
as Engl-ish as anxiety snagged in floral  
some foliage is the stuff of paperbacks





*Eighteen degrees Celsius  
Zagora  
No events  
Mostly cloudy*

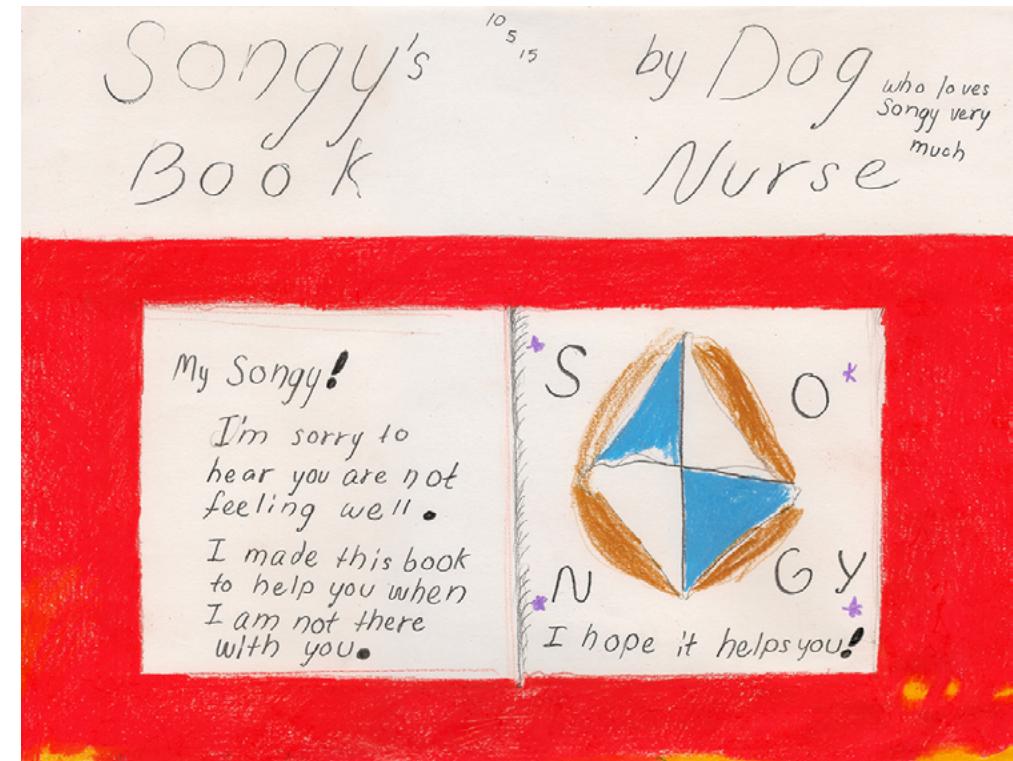
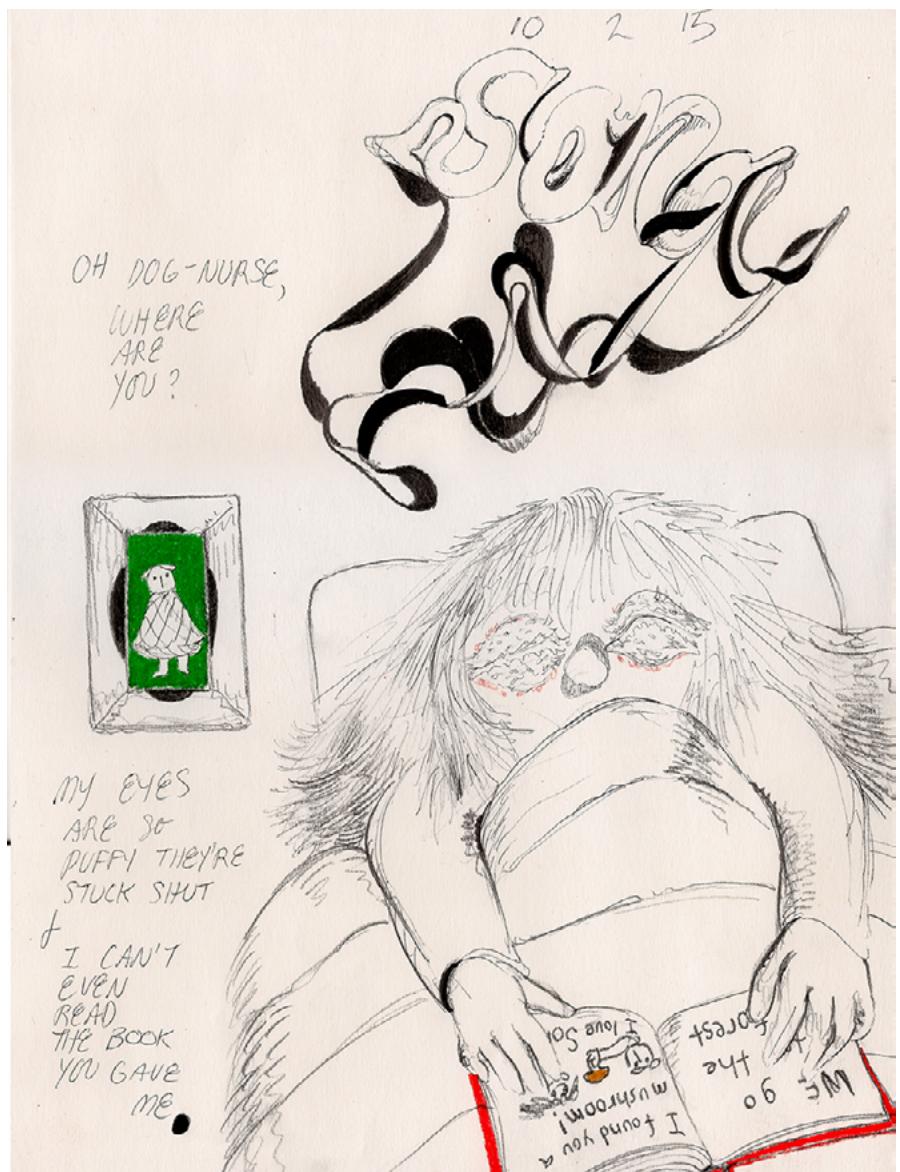
It was as fake as most movies. I loved the final shot.  
It was a puritanical film.  
The conceit of the vampire author genius  
Musician genius  
Was heavy-handed  
And stupid.  
Also, Tangiers  
Is not like that.

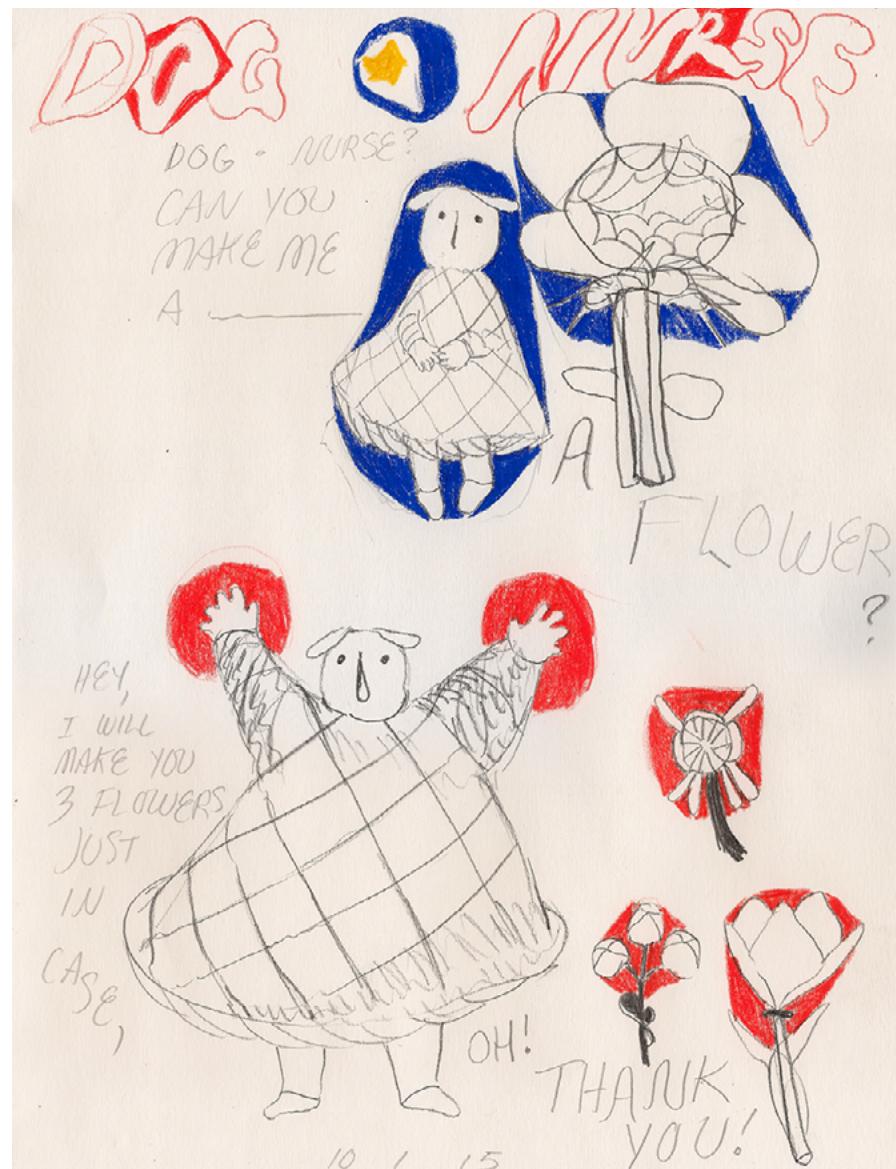
I got a ghostwriting job.  
So I have to watch *Moonrise Kingdom*.

It's January.  
The water  
In the pool  
At the back  
Of the auberge  
Is cold.  
Still,  
I sit beside it.  
I sit in a tent.  
It is a square tent.  
I am joined by a hungry peacock.  
And then  
I am joined by a bandaged dog.

In a green pleated skirt I pass a forest of palms,  
The roads eyelashed in sand.  
Children look  
From my face  
To my high tops

To my face.  
I like it.  
I get  
What I come for.  
Do I tell you?





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VAHNI CAPILDEO was born and educated in Trinidad and holds a DPhil in Old Norse from Christ Church, Oxford. Her most recent book is *Measures of Expatriation* (Carcanet, 2016), the Poetry Book Society's Choice for Spring.

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SARAH FERRICK was born in 1988 on Long Island. She now lives and works in Chicago.

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