Lyric Encounters with Other Places: Juliana's Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* and Robert Minhinnick's 'An Isotope Dreaming'

In her poetics statement for *American Poets in the 21ˢᵗ Century*: *The New Poetics*, Juliana Spahr proposes:

> There are so many rules about how to write poetry that there might as well not be any at all. Poetry moves words around. It rearranges them from their conventions. It re-sorts them. It uses more than one language. It repeats. It pursues aconventional language and divergent typography. It often experiments. It can be ephemeral and occasional. It often uses pleasing patterns as it does all this. And all that helps me think.[1]

Later in her statement Spahr states that poetry is associated with movement, duration and transport: 'The feeling of being set in motion, a feeling that moves one to another place' (132). These ideas of thought and movement recall Robert Pinsky's identification of a 'discursive lyric' that presents 'the poet talking, predicating, moving directly and as systematically and unaffectedly as he would walk from one place to another.'[2] Broadly speaking, Pinsky's model of a 'discursive lyric', posits the self as the primary organising principle of the work. Central to this tendency is the articulation of the subject's feelings and desires, and a strongly marked division between subjectivity and its articulation as expression. What is most apparent in the discursive model of the lyric, is the immanence of the self and its centrality in the composition as the subject of the writing. Unlike Pinsky's perception of poetic 'thinking' as an inchoate interiority that retains its privacy and inclusion, Spahr's ambition is to create a lyric discursiveness which moves outward, towards the world. Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* (2005) was written as a response to 9/11 and the Iraq War.[3] The sequences in the volume create a space of duration and process, moving the impetus of the work beyond a drive towards a lyric epiphany. Instead of an entry into a

corralled personal realm, the volume creates an important human ecosystem in its attempts to make relationships between poetic text, human body and world. This gesture to establish a lyric discursiveness sited beyond interiority, is mentioned by Spahr as an ambition to create 'poems dealing with the complex questions of how to talk to one another. More poems that acknowledge how difficult that is. More poems that look outward.'[4]

The speaker in Minhinnick's 'Return of the Natives' from *King Driftwood* suggests wryly that 'could be I'm/ back could be supplementary information/ exists could be I never / left.'[5] Minhinnick's poetry is frequently cited as incorporating elements of travel writing, his poems often seek linkages between his native Wales and a global community. This claim is supplemented by his collection of prose essays that include meditations on travel, ecology, war and politics: *Watching the Fire Eater* (1992), *Badlands* (1996) and *To Babel and Back* (2005).[6] But Minhinnick's poetry cannot solely be read as a form of travel writing reliant upon a process where an impression of *cymreictod* (Welshness), becomes the end design to which all new experiences are returned. In the long poem sequence 'An Isotope Dreaming', the poet weaves the language of science with meditations of his hometown Porthcawl, as well as narratives highlighting the human cost of the war in Iraq. Minhinnick has already addressed some of his experiences of travelling to Baghdad following the first Iraq war researching the use of depleted Uranium in US weapons.[7] Nuclear waste and its radioactivity become both a benign and malign vehicle in the poem to illustrate the dissemination of ideas, birth of languages, acts of mobility and spirituality, as well as entropy and destruction.

Both Spahr and Minhinnick's poetry has been productively approached as performing an ecological writing or ecopoetics; critics have also focused upon their work as establishing dynamic relationships between the local and the global.[8] This essay considers the network of relationships established between lyricism and encounters with other places in Spahr and Minhinnick's poetry. Both poets consider the implications of war upon the places described in their poetry. For Spahr these encounters are with virtual places, heavily mediated through

information systems and newsgathering networks. I will argue that Spahr is all too attuned to the dangers of writing about war as a distant observer, watched on her computer screen.[9] As Michael Palmer has reflected, the lure of writing the anti-war poem often appears as an 'American tendency', where the temptation is 'to read our politics out of these distant events and then to write some almost self-congratulatory oppositional work.'[10] For both Spahr and Minhinnick, the long poetic sequence creates an important interaction between meditations upon war and the processing of information. In *this connection of everyone with lungs* the extent of news and web information is overwhelming, Spahr questions how one can possibly formulate military knowledge to create connections with individual experience. Her notes to the volume admit 'I thought that by watching the news more seriously I could be a little less naive. But I gained no sophisticated understanding as I wrote these poems' (13). For Minhinnick, multiple transitions in his work enable the inclusion of information to be enfolded into a lyric subjectivity that enacts dispersal, not unlike the radioactivity dominating the poem. Essays by American poets Lyn Hejinian and Palmer offer useful directions in attempting to understand the nature of the encounters that guide the lyricism of *this connection of everyone with lungs* and 'An Isotope Dreaming'. Hejinian's reflection in her essay 'Barbarism' on the Greek word *'xenos'* suggestive of foreigner or stranger, creates a meditation upon the figure of the border as both a point of reciprocity and differentiation.[11] Her essay 'Reason' on poetry as a medium of encounters, offers a further way of approaching *this connection of everyone with lungs* as a constantly evolving sequence.[12] We can begin to think of lyric subjectivity not as a fixed entity but as a dynamic; or as Hejinian proposes subjectivity as 'a mobile (and mobilized) reference point.'[13] Palmer's essay 'Poetry at the Periphery' with its consideration of the role of poets as border workers[14] enables a further understanding of the encounters inhabiting Minhinnick's travelogue in 'An Isotope, Dreaming'. Cast through these different perspectives, the personal lyric in its encounters with other places, attempts a dissemination of self that can also establish a sustainable reflection upon war.

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At one point in Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* a voice comments upon an astronaut's image of the earth from a space station:

> In space, the earth is a firm circle of atmosphere and the ocean and
> the land exist in equilibrium. The forces of nature are in the blue
> and the white and the green.
>
> All is quiet
>
> All the machinery, all the art is in the quiet. (34)

Global information and newsgathering systems form a key component of Spahr's volume and she insistently calls upon poetry as a medium of thought and enquiry. Spahr states that:

> I think of writing less as a resistant practice and more as a place where one
> explores new alliances and builds new structures that require lots of
> scaffoldings. Some of these structures fall down. But others might become
> entirely different forms of thoughts.[15]

this connection of everyone with lungs consists of two extended poems, one simply entitled 'poem written after september 11, 2001' and the second 'poem written from november 30, 2002 to March 27, 2003'. Set in long prose-like lineation the poems are intimate and epistolary addressing two lovers or what she calls 'beloveds'. This hybrid form of poetic prosody, intersperses factual information with lyric appeals and private mediation. In the volume there are encounters between very different forms of information, from comments on climate change and data on the Iraq war, to information about the celebrity sightings of Winona Ryder, Fat Boy Slim, Zoë Ball, David Letterman and Roman Polanski. Spahr comments that in responding to world events the appeal of the lyric became more and more attractive:

> I felt that I had to think about what I was connected with, and what I was complicit with, as I lived off the fat of the military-industrial complex on a small island. I had to think about my intimacy with things I would rather not be intimate with even as (because?) I was very far away from all those things geographically. This made lyric with its attention to connection, with its dwelling on the beloved and on the afar- suddenly somewhat poignant, somewhat apt even somewhat more useful than I usually find it. (13)

Turning to the first poem from *this connection of everyone with lungs* illustrates a pattern of breath, as well as a connection between individuals, domestic interiors, then countries and across continents. Spahr in effect creates a series of encounters between bodies that replicate, unfold and disseminate into synchronous movement:

> There is space between the hands.
>
> There is space between the hands and space around the hands.
>
> There is space around the hands and space in the room.
>
> There is space in the room that surrounds the shapes of everyone's hands and body and feet and cells and the beating contained within.
>
> There is space, an uneven space, made by this pattern of bodies.
>
> This space goes in and out of everyone's bodies.
>
> Everyone with lungs breathes the space in and out as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands in and out
>
> as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and the space around the hands in and out.[16]

The accumulative patterning of phrases and clauses, as space around the hands becomes a space around a communal breathing, creates a synchronous patterning and search for connection which moves beyond a room to the earth's atmosphere, expanding from troposphere and stratosphere to mesosphere. The references to breath and spatial cognition links us back to Charles Olson's ground breaking manifesto essay 'Projective Verse' (1950), which emphasises the performance of the

poem, the relationship between utterance and breath– in effect the inhabiting of the body by the poem.[17] Olson remarks upon the failure to observe the importance that breath exerts in the performance and kinetics of poetry. He suggest that its role has 'not (due, I think, to the smothering of the power of the line by too set a concept of foot) [...] been sufficiently observed or practiced' (149). Instead he suggests that 'if verse is to advance to its proper force and place in the day, now, ahead. I take it that PROJECTIVE VERSE teaches, is, this lesson, that the verse will only do in which a poet manages to register both the acquisitions of his ear and the pressures of his breath' (149). We can begin to think of Spahr's title as an organising system for the poem, as well as associating the poet as a bardic or orphic presence. Moreover, the analogy with lungs and breath creates an ecosystem within the poem, not only in terms of the duration of the line, but also as a measure and unit of thought.

Spahr's relationship to language writing offers insights to the form and ambition of *this connection of everyone with lungs*. Language writing's questioning of established lyric forms offers alternatives to what Spahr refers to as forms of 'individualism and idiosyncrasy', pointing instead towards 'unexpected and yet intimate pluralism.'[18] Usefully she considers this momentum as a shift from ideas of confessionalism to 'language writing's self-aware roots in modernism.' Spahr has on numerous occasions noted the importance of Hejinian's poetry and essays on her own work. We can link the tenets of language writing's focus on a writing that is largely 'reader-centred', embracing an utopian ambition to create new communities through poetry, with Spahr's own proposition of 'connective readings'.[19] Her critical work poses that connective readings examine works that 'look at the relation between reading and identity in order to comment on the nature of connectivity' (5). Spahr's poetry also develops Ron Silliman's appeals in 'The New Sentence' (1977) to affirm the paratactic sentence as opposed to the line as a unit of thought.[20] In his manifesto, Silliman illustrates his argument with attention to Gertrude Stein from *How to Write* (1931), another key influence upon Spahr. Silliman proposes that 'The New Sentence' demands the constant and immediate attention of the reader at the level of the sentence. 'The New Sentence' in effect challenges the impulse towards syllogistic movement,

embracing 'external devices which function to keep the reader's or listener's experience at least partly in the present, consuming the text' (79). By contrast, he proposes that 'most fiction foregrounds the syllogistic, leap or integration above the level of the sentence, to create a fully referential tale' (79). In brief, by limiting 'syllogistic movement', 'The New Sentence' maintains 'the reader's attention at or very close to the level of language, that is, most often at the sentence level or below' (91). Spahr's own volume may not perform the more extreme paratactic framings of 'The New Sentence', but she uses the sentence structure as a method for including and juxtaposing disparate materials. These immediate shifts from news bulletins, statistics gleaned from the internet or documentary images from protest rallies, impresses upon the reader the dizzying transitions in Spahr's research, as well as the volume's sustained attempt towards inclusiveness.

Written initially as response to the US government's intervention in Iraq Spahr's 'poem written from november 30, 2002 to March 27, 2003' delineates an overwhelming pressure to give form to information regarding the war. Spahr was based in Hawaii at the time and the interconnected sections are all dated individually. Flora and fauna on the island are depicted in the midst of thinking about war. The reader is told that 'We reclined as we spoke' and 'we were surrounded by ditches, streams, and wetland areas, which serve as a habitat for endangered waterbird species' (66). Spahr attempts to incorporate topical knowledge to a shape that forms connectives with individuals. The movement of air in the first poem is replaced by fire in the second:

> When I wake up this morning the world is a series of isolated,
> burning fires as it is every morning.
>
> It burns in Israel where ten died from a bomb on a bus.
>
> Yesterday it also burned in the Philippines where twenty-one died
> from a bomb at an airport. And then it burned some more a few
> hours later outside a health clinic in a nearby city, killing one.
>
> It burns and the pope urges everyone to fast and pray for peace
> because it is Ash Wednesday. (56)

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This is a poet's desperate attempt to understand the interconnection between wars, her country's involvement in Iraq, and religious rituals. Spahr is looking not only for connectives that bind communities together, but to show how the machinery of war appropriates the environment. Her speaker illustrates how Hawaii's status as a military base redefines the ecology of the island:

> And because the planes flew overhead when we spoke of the cries
> of birds our every word was an awkward squawk that meant also
> AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, UH-60 Black Hawk troop helicopter. (67)

Encounters in Spahr's poetry present themselves as this strained cohabiting, enforcing not only a sense of the ecological and political, but an awareness to processes and histories of colonisation. Spahr has commented that:

> I am interested in works that encourage communal readings. I would include identificatory moments in this, but I would also want to include moments that are non-identificatory: moments when one realizes the limits of one's knowledge; moments of partial or qualified identification; moments when one realizes and respects unlikeness.[21]

Spahr's evocation of a strangeness, or unlikeness inherent in the making of poetry has a pointed resonance with Hejinian's essay 'Barbarism'. Hejinian's invocation of 'barbarism' in her title is examined firstly as a consideration of *barbaros* as strangeness, which is then developed to an examination of the Greek word 'xenos' suggestive of foreigner or stranger. Hejinian meditates upon the figure of the border as both a point of reciprocity and differentiation, borders she asserts are 'by definition addressed to foreignness.'[22] This figuration of the border is suggestive not only as a meeting point or encounter, but a certain overlap which Hejinian points to as a form of co-existence or *xenia:*

> The *xenos* figure is one of contradiction and confluence. The stranger it names is both guest and host... The guest/ host relationship is one of identity as much as it is of reciprocity[...] The guest/ host relationship comes into existence solely in and as occurrence, that of their meeting,

> their encounter. Every encounter produces, even if for only a flash of an instant a *xenia*- the occurrence of coexistence which is also an occurrence of strangeness or foreignness. It is a strange occurrence that, nonetheless, happens constantly; we have no other experience of living than through encounters. (326)

The encounters delineated in Spahr's text between web information, news reports and the lyric appeal to her 'beloveds' refutes any authoritative impulse. Instead, the transitions between sentences in the volume emphasises the provisional trajectory Spahr creates her two anti-war poems. Hejinian's essay 'Reason' also offers an opportunity to consider how the encounters established in Spahr's work can be read as a specific and singular establishing of 'context'. At the heart of Hejinian's evocation is a consideration of context as a form of intersubjective ethics:

> The context, in other words, is the medium of our encounter, the ground of our encounter, the ground of our becoming (i.e. happening to be) present at the same place at the same time.[23]

Context for Hejinian appears to suggest not only a meeting point of two different positions, but also the affirmation of a shared commonality. In this constant reconfiguration of context, reason is presented not as a figure of causation, but as a form of suture or linkage. Hejinian's essay affirms that this situating of context continually establishes a shared recognition, even a proximity. The form that this perpetual beginning takes is evoked by Hejinian as an acknowledgement of the sensation '*this is happening*' (343).

Spahr mentions that Hejinian's essay helped her to consider poetry as a 'language of inquiry.'[24] The attempt to delineate a constant change of context is enforced in *this connection of everyone with lungs*, where the personal realm is intersected by observations on world affairs and citations from global news networks:

> As I thought, the shuttle crashed on its return home, North Korea restarted its plutonium reactors, two close friends broke up, another tried to kill himself, another checked himself out of rehab for the third time in order to return to his ice habit, and water continued to be wantonly used despite

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warnings that a lack of water will probably lead to severe crop shortages
across the globe in the near future. (58)

Working on the premise of threat and destruction, the news of Korea's imminent nuclear arms programme is placed in conjunction with the breakdown of personal relationships. Equally the reflection upon a friend's drug addiction sutures an 'ice habit' with the ecological 'wanton' waste of water. It is clear that Spahr seeks to open up the lyric to a public realm which challenges the privacy of the individual as a self-contained unit. Through the epistolary address to her 'beloveds', Spahr attempts to enforce the primacy of intimate connections as a way of exploring global events. She asserts her admiration for writing 'that moves poetry away from individualism to shared, connective spaces. And in writing that reveals how our private intimacies have public obligations and ramifications, how intimacy has a social bond with shared meaning.'[25] As Kimberly Lamm alertly comments 'What is even more haunting, and what Spahr renders with brave invention, is that the apparatuses and discourses of war become part of sensual and caring encounters.'[26] Lamm argues that Spahr offers 'a compelling image of globalization and neoimperialism's violent encroachments into intimate subjective spaces; in turn she makes intimacy part of war's public discourse' (146). This is particularly evident when the speaker of *this connection of everyone with lungs* states 'the military-industrial complex enters our bed at night' (63). In the closing pages of the volume erotic love is affiliated to military hardware: 'In bed, when I stroke the down of yours cheeks, I stroke also the carrier battle group ships, the guided missile cruisers, and the guided missile destroyers' (74).

Ian Gregson discerns not only the impact of the travelogue on Minhinnick's poetry, but also how travel impacts upon the texture of the poet's work. Gregson claims that the poet has invented 'a kind of travel poem which is distinctively his own' and more importantly states 'his environmental anxieties have contributed to this because they lead to a sense of how local problems are also global problems– that, environmentally, there is one, shared planet which is being endangered everywhere.'[27] Minhinnick admits that 'North American landscapes made me want to write longer poems, but I also wished to

write in a more variegated way'.[28] 'An Isotope Dreaming' begins in South Wales, the speaker muses on redemption, which to him comes in the form of a reactor:

> Resurrection
> is in the reactor.
> It's the atom that's reborn
> The soul perishes
> but matter can never be destroyed.[29]

The possible resurrection offered by the nuclear reactor is not only the provision of energy but also the deadly half-life of a decaying isotope. The speaker admits in a spiritual frenzy: 'We are all/ fuel rods- spent, eternal' and 'the half-life of angels/ that the world calls waste' (10). The isotope moves beyond the 'iron womb of Sellafield', the 'cubist monument of Trawsfynydd' and the 'accelerator tunnel at Berkeley' (9) making three journeys. The first is to an undisclosed 'nameless place' where the 'geiger talk/ like a black habanero rattling with seeds' (11). Yet even here the isotope is associated with birth and creation 'I am the Isotope dreaming/ Where they bury me an idea starts to grow' (10). The second journey is to Iraq's Basra and the ancient city-states of Nineveh and Babylon, while the third journey visits Belarus and the legacy of Chernobyl. Minhinnick is also looking for connections, for a sense of linkages between communities. The form of the poem with its drafted in voices as well as stammers, visual performance on the page, repetitive clauses and pared down lyrics enacts an 'open field' poetics combining speeches of different kinds – conversation, paratactical formations and collages of information in various forms.

The following quotation by Palmer may serve to elucidate what I consider to be the encounters inherent in Minhinnick's poetry:

> Speaking in the margins, at the barriers or boundaries, perhaps the poets I am considering might be thought of as border workers, constantly passing through checkpoints. There are, after all, guards, custom officials, official guardians of custom. Checking the papers. What deterriorialized space or page might poets be said to inhabit, what curious inside-outside, nowhere/ now here. What language is (un)spoken here?[30]

The encounters enacted within 'An Isotope Dreaming' present a poetry written without predetermination, which enables the poet to enact multiple conversations throughout the journeys. Yet, unlike Spahr's *this connection of everyone with lungs* Minhinnick is keen to situate us beyond the mediated reports of the TV and internet. The evocation of poetic creation as a form of radioactive decay in the poem enables the poet to transgress the barriers of checkpoints and overheard conversations from opposing sides. In the second 'journey' we listen to a doctor in Iraq's damning indictment of the US involvement in the war: 'And no, I don't feel sorry for your boys./ Let them anoint their blisters / with Exxon's frankincense.' He adds 'We all sign up for something' (14). Key to the poem is the pervading presence of radioactive decay that enters the body and earth, and warps linguistic creation:

> I was anointed by a devil
> and sat still in the back
> What's the half-life of the half-life? I asked.
>
> It's on your boots, they said.
>   In your hair.
> It's on the map that has brought us to this nameless place
> It's in my mouth, I said. It's on my skin.
> It's in the earth under my nails and the fillings in my teeth.
> It's in the water I drank and the mesquite I chewed.
> And from now it's in my words and they will never let it out
> because words are the green bones that we bend to make a child. (11)

This momentum of entropy in the poem, the constant reformulation of decay and attack performs an immediate sensation of encounter and dissemination. In this poem Minhinnick captures a key preoccupation of Palmer's essay 'Poetry and Contingency: Within a Timeless Moment of Barbaric Thought'.[31] Palmer comments upon the network of associations and configurations which make the poem; and how a poem must be read with as retaining a degree of mobility and momentum at the time of its reading. His reading of poetry's response to 'a moment of Barbarism' re-establishes the relevance of contemporary poet's ongoing engagement with society:

> The poem is altered by events that it cannot possibly foresee ... The point is not simply how work responds to current events, but how previous work is altered by and alters, those events … Poetry as something happening among other things happening. As something happening in language, and to language under siege. Poetry as memory, sometimes memory of the future. Poetry as both fixed and in process, ever a paradox. (59)

The long poem's form, with its conceit of a radioactivity and evasive transient subjectivity grant Minhinnick a freedom to recreate disparate historical events within the same timeframe. Past events are reinterpreted and reencountered; the reader is faced with the Swansea Blitz of the second world war from a new temporal standpoint:

> Now Swansea is burning again,
> its sky the stained glass in the Brangwyn Hall
>
> The epicentre is Green Dragon Lane,
>   and as the Guildhall
> melts its limestone
>   lifts like lingerie (9)

The poem's apocalyptic presentation of a post-nuclear holocaust paradoxically associates radioactivity with the creativity of the poet. The poet emerges from 'the terrible core' of the reactor to become 'warrior of a tribe that learned/ to enrich language' (10). Our speaker challenges assumptions by comparing radioactive decay to the dispersal of thought, the poet in effect becomes 'the isotope dreaming' (10). Later radioactivity is further associated with poetic writing as the dispersal of atomic energy is mirrored with the rupturing of words into associative patterns. Gamma rays become the 'game we play at the gateway' (15), disseminating to 'the gam the g in the gateway/ the atoms speaking in new tenses', (15) 'and the gamma/ ghosting towards/ the cell's gateway' (17).

Encounters in Minhinnick's text can be understood as transition points that sustain the momentum of the long poem and the patterning of accretion and dispersal. In remarking on the poetry of high modernism, Jonathan Levin suggests that 'characteristic poetics of transition [...] allows for the satisfactions of coherence and intelligent design while at the

same time cultivating the dislocations that break down and ultimately recast coherent designs.'[32] Levin's understanding of transition bears a resonance with Hejinian's evocation of *xenia* or strangeness. Levin poses that transition is 'a name for something that could never be named' and then asserts:

> Transition is a figure for the process whereby the familiar is relentlessly exposed to the unfamiliar, incorporating an undefined, undefinable excess into a previously articulated system. Once that excess is incorporated, however, the system is modified- the unfamiliar familiarized, the dynamic stabilized- and so the transition itself is rendered illegible. (xiiii)

Whereas for Hejinian the experience of defamiliarisation is poetry's abiding rubric, Levin suggests that new encounters are invariably incorporated and assimilated into the existing system, albeit resulting in a modification to the original work. In 'An Isotope Dreaming', the incorporation of technical or geographical circumscribed words marks out points of transition in the text. Take for example the retelling of the following narrative:

> Outside her hogan
> the child's horizon
> was a black circle
> on grey paper.
> Nothing else was allowed.
> She followed the dust
> back and forth
> it was in her hair
> and on her skin. (12)

Here Minhinnick plays within two languages, we can identify 'hogan' as the noun for the traditional home of the Navajo, equally in Welsh 'hogan' means young girl. The incorporation of the Navajo word marks a transition that can also be assimilated to create symmetry between propositions in the text. Later in the poem, Minhinnick- a clever wordsmith, is able to unite the use of depleted uranium stock as warfare to religious text. A doctor cares for 'twins from their bleak bed' and has successfully 'translated uranium's Koran/ that was written into each

chromosome' (13). These moments of transition enable the poet to perform a transformative role in 'An Isotope Dreaming' and challenge the characterisation of Minhinnick's work as mere poetic travelogue. At the close there is an element of returning home with memorabilia. From his Welsh seaside caravan the poet-trickster admits that his travels are complete:

> here are the trophies I brought home:
>   the ristra,
>   the vodka,
>   the rug from the suq (17)

But we are reminded that the speaker of this poem operates as both participant and investigative observer, inhabiting prohibited places where 'their army did not see me pass' (11), or intangible places which the speaker conjures a future 'I will wait out the sun/ I will outwit the moon' (17).

Minhinnick's poem inscribes encounters with other places as a way of informing the transitions in his work, whereas the 'outward' movement of Spahr's lyric attempts to make connective threads which are about creating conversations and affiliations. Using the conceit of radioactive decay 'An Isotope Dreaming' records a dissemination of self in different places, but ultimately returns to a final point of origination. For Spahr, the importance of plurality in her appeal to 'beloveds', retains its focus on processes which establish relationships and affiliations. Spahr's volume presents a more overtly utopic project which describes footage of anti-war demonstrations in collective terms: 'I imagine the bodies of friends in the crowds of various cities, feel moments of connection with the mass as I imagine it down to individuals' (60). Not surprisingly, Spahr admits that against the lyric prevalence of the 'I', the '"we" is also a great utopian pronoun and also a necessary one for various sorts of political action. And so I wanted to think about a wide "we".'[33] While Minhinnick might disavow the utopianism of Spahr's project, his adaptation of the long poem performs an exploration of war, without reverting to the static self-congratulatory position often ascribed to contemporary anti-war poetry. Ultimately both poets' shared position of negotiating ideas of encounter in

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the long poem, creates a lyric form that addresses war by focusing on processes of mobility, transition and inclusion.

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[1] Juliana Spahr, 'Poetics Statement' in *American Poets in the 21ˢᵗ Century: The New Poetics* eds. Claudia Rankine & Lisa Sewell (Middletown CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 2007) pp. 131–33 (p. 131).

[2] Robert Pinsky, *The Situation of Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 133.

[3] Spahr, *this connection of everyone with lungs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[4] Spahr, 'Poetry in a Time of Crisis', *Poetry Project Newsletter* 189 (2002), p. 8.

[5] Robert Minhinnick, *King Driftwood* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2008), p. 97.

[6] Minhinnick, *Watching the Fire Eater* (Bridgend: Seren, 1992); *Badlands* (Bridgend: Seren, 1992); *To Babel and Back* (Bridgend: Seren, 2005).

[7] Minhinnick, 'The Thief of Baghdad', *To Babel and Back*, pp.14–21.

[8] See for instance Nicky Marsh, Going "Glocal": The Local and the Global in Recent Experimental Women's Poetry' *Contemporary Women's Writing* 1.1/2 (2007): 192-202 and Ian Gregson, 'The Baghdad Moon, the Pepsi Globe: Robert Minhinnick' *PN Review* 31.6 (2005).

[9] Spahr admits that 'Now I can't imagine how one wrote poetry before the Internet. When I write poetry I spend a lot of time with search engines like Google and Nexis.' 'A Conversation with Juliana Spahr – Joel Bettridge' *How 2* 2.3 (2005) Accessed:www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v2_3_2005/current/index.htm

[10] Palmer, 'Interview: Conducted by Peter Gizzi', *Exact Change Yearbook #1,* ed. Peter Gizzi (Boston: Exact Change, 1995), pp.161–79 (p.167).

[11] Hejinian, 'Barbarism' 'Barbarism', in *The Language of Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) pp. 318–36.

[12] Hejinian, 'Reason' *The Language of Inquiry*, pp. 337–54.

[13] Hejinian, "The Person and Description", *Poetics Journal* 9 (1991), p. 167.

[14] Michael Palmer, 'Poetry at the Periphery' in *Active Boundaries: Selected Essays and Talks* (New York: New Directions, 2008) pp. 207–25.

[15] Spahr, 'Interview with Joel Bettridge', p. 5

[16] Spahr, *this connection of everyone with lungs*, p. 4–5.

[17] Charles Olson 'Projective Verse', eds. Donald Allen and Warren Tallman *The Poetics of the New American Poetry* (New York: Grove Press, 1973), pp. 147–58.

[18] Spahr, 'After Language Poetry' Accessed http://www.ubu.com/papers/oei/spahr.html

[19] Spahr, *Everybody's Autonomy: Connective Reading and Collective Identity* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

[20] Ron Silliman, 'The New Sentence' in *The New Sentence'* (New York: Roof, 2003), pp. 63–93.

[21] Spahr, *Everybody's Autonomy* p. 5.

[22] Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry*, p. 326.

[23] Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry*, p. 342.

[24] Spahr, 'Poetics Statement', p. 131.

[25] Spahr, 'After Language Poetry'.

[26] Kimberley Lamm 'All Together/ Now: Writing the Space of Collectivities in the Poetry of Juliana Spahr' in *American Poets in the 21st Century: The New Poetics* eds. Claudia Rankine & Lisa Sewell (Middletown CT.: Wesleyan University Press, 2007), pp. 133–50 (p. 146).

[27] Gregson, 'The Baghdad Moon, the Pepsi Globe: Robert Minhinnick', p. 52.

[28] Minhinnick, 'Interview with Ian Gregson' *Planet* (2004), p. 49.

[29] Minhinnick, *King Driftwood*, p. 9

[30] Palmer, 'Poetry at the Periphery', p. 222

[31] Palmer, 'Poetry and Contingency: Within a Timeless Moment of Barbaric Thought' *Active Boundaries* pp. 47–60.

[32] Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism & American Literary Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p 15.

[33] Spahr, 'A Conversation with Juliana Spahr – Joel Bettridge', p. 4.