

out of everywhere 2

out of

linguistically innovative poetry
by women in north america & the uk

everywhere 2

edited & introduced by emily critchley

REALITY STREET

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‘Now: to let go what we knew
to not be tight, but
toney; to find a world, a word
we didn’t know’

Eleni Sikelianos, *The California Poem*

With thanks to the publisher, Ken Edwards; partner in proof-reading,
Ann M Hale; partner in life, Seaton Gordon; and all the poets!

Not all poems are complete or continuous from within the original
collections, but, with the writers’ permission, some text has been elided,
some starts *in media res*...

Emily Critchley

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For my daughter, Elena

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To the Reader

“out of everywhere,” says factual self
but are there precursors to being beside self before birth of it.

Sara Wintz,

Walking Across a Field We Are Focused on at This Time Now

It is twenty years since Ken Edwards and Wendy Mulford of Reality Street invited Maggie O’Sullivan to edit an anthology of contemporary linguistically innovative poetry by women in the US, Canada and the UK – the first of its kind to be published in Britain. Happily, today more formally original, politically and philosophically engaged poetry is being written by greater numbers of women than ever before. Here, then, is the chance to encounter some of it, in the sequel to that groundbreaking book: *Out of Everywhere 2*.

But is there *still* a need for an all-female anthology of avant garde poetry today, I hear some of you ask? My answer is in the years of careful labour that have gone into making this book, and the decision to keep its original title too. Certainly, there is no lack of prominent female writers in mainstream British poetry worlds – represented by national newspapers, poetry journals, prizes, and school curricula – a world which still holds sway over “poetry’s cultural capital” in this country.¹ In the UK, we even have a female laureate for the first time. Yet, as events in the “alt lit” scenes both here and in North America continue to prove, misogyny still lurks not far beneath the surface of what are meant to be some of our most advanced experimental writing and thinking communities.

Even if we bracket the politics of these writing scenes, and attendant, vital questions of publication, dissemination and promotion, O’Sullivan’s claim, in her introduction to the original *Out of Everywhere*, that “much of the most significant work over recent years, particularly, in the US [...] is being made by women” holds truer than ever and would in itself justify the existence of this anthology. Furthermore, the much larger proportion of British poets included in the sequel (roughly half) shows something of a sea change in poetic practices this side of the Atlantic. No longer does there seem to be “a dearth of women writing experimentally in Britain”, as I wrote back in 2007 in *Jacket*² – a transformation, or at least increased visibility of one, in a very short space of time. In large part this is due to the dedicated labour – of reading, publishing, teaching, reviewing, organising, and so on – of many of the writers in the original *OOE* and of the writers in this sequel too.

There is a contemporary wave of confidence and camaraderie, facilitated by the public-private slippages the internet allows: the speed with which writers can link up with other writers, and writing, across the world; the ability to be in or out of everywhere or anywhere at the click of a button. For instance, the for-

mation of an all female British writers' listserv in 2012, inspired by various long-standing American models, has become a necessary hub of writing, thinking, campaigning and supporting activity.³

Indeed, despite an increased number of entries (43 poets) there is *too much* talent to be represented exhaustively here. I regret all omissions. I plead the usual constraints of time and space. I hope that the sheer variety of the work selected will go some way to making up for that not featured. What follows can only be a partial snapshot of a moment in literary time. Likewise it is impossible to do justice to the rich diversity of the poets included and their substantial oeuvres. Much of what follows has been lifted from longer poetic sequences, project-oriented work, and cross-genre engagements with, especially, visual, performance and sound work. I can only hope that the poetry here will, as the original anthology did, inspire readers to look further into this exciting field, to appreciate and be challenged by some of the most important writers of our time.

EMILY CRITCHLEY
January 2015

1 As noted by Carrie Etter in her excellent introduction to *Infinite Difference: Other Poetries by UK Women Poets* (Shearsman Books, 2010).

2 "Post-Marginal Positions: Women and the UK Experimental/Avant-Garde Poetry Community, A Cross-Atlantic Forum", moderated by Catherine Wagner. *Jacket*, 34 (October 2007) <http://jacketmagazine.com/34/wagner-forum.shtml>

3 It must be noted that this increased activity is in part a reaction to the violent, sometimes anonymous, misogyny also facilitated by the internet. As Andrea Brady, the founder of the British women's listserv, recently put it in an email to me: "we seem to be living through a new wave of feminism in response to this, and the re-articulation of a bold and assertive feminist identity both within poetry and outside it is a positive consequence of what seems in many ways a very dire and regressive surge of violence towards women especially concentrated in digital environments." (Andrea Brady, email to author, 21 November 2014.)