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Transplace Poetics: A Conversation and Reading with Lisa Samuels

Lisa SAMUELS and Hannah VAN HOVE

University of Auckland and Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Introduction

Prof. dr. Lisa Samuels has published sixteen books of poetry, prose, and transgenre work, one critical pamphlet, and two edited books. She co-edits the journal *Ka Mate Ka Ora* and she has published dozens of critical essays and theory notes in journals including *Chicago Review* and *Qui Parle* as well as many creative pieces in media such as *Jacket* and *Landfall*. She gives talks and performances internationally and collaborates with musicians and film-makers, including for an art-film adaptation of her book *Tomorrowland*. Her work appears in resources such as *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry in English*, *The Guardian*, and the Grand Prix Lycéen des Compositeurs, and she regularly reviews for international presses and arts organizations, curates publications and symposia, and works in arts communities. Professor Samuels is committed to proliferating modes of language, investigating the humanimal condition, and articulating ethical and interpretive theories. At the University of Auckland she teaches literature, theory, and creative writing and supervises graduate research in performance studies, poetry, comparative literature, fiction, transgenre and multimedia. Lisa Samuels was a visiting artist-scholar at the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at the Free University Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) from September to December 2019.

Dr. Hannah Van Hove

Hannah Van Hove is a writer and researcher based in Brussels. She completed a PhD on the fiction of Anna Kavan, Alexander Trocchi and Ann Quin at the University of Glasgow in 2017 and is currently

conducting an FWO-funded postdoctoral research project on the work of British post-war experimental women writers at the Free University Brussels. She is chair of the Anna Kavan Society, an editorial board member of the *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Studies* and member of the artistic research group Deep Histories Fragile Memories. She has published articles and reviews on British avant-garde fiction as well as translations of Flemish modernist Paul van Ostaijen's poetry. Her poems and writing have appeared in *Adjacent Pineapple*, *Gutter* and *MAP Magazine*.

'Transplace poetics' was the title of a session at the 2019 symposium *'Robinson Crusoe Revisited: Literary & Intermedial Legacies of the "First Novel in English"'* organised by the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at the Free University Brussels. Coextensive with the intensity of modern migrations, transplace poetics imagines art practices that are situated in transplace: a transnationalism and trans-regionalism that is its own real condition. The emphasis is not on an ephemeral in-between but on a constitutive one: constellated intersections that are emplacement. During the session Hannah Van Hove went into conversation with Lisa Samuels. What follows is an edited transcription of their conversation and audience questions.

Hannah Van Hove: You've described yourself as a 'transplace' writer, so maybe we could start our discussion thinking about transplace and what it means to you. It is also a really important aspect of your book *Tomorrowland* (2009), I think – can we think of this work in terms of a transplace poetics?

Lisa Samuels: Yes, I think so, though I'll start with your first question. To be transplace, to articulate that, is partly to queer the dominant narrative of single-place origin. Certainly many people move often, and many others come to feel a place-identity that combines different locales – there are many

conversations to have about migrations, present day and in past centuries. One reason being transplace is motivating for my work is that I've been transplace my entire existence, since I was a baby, moving from place to place to place: my childhood was spent in different parts of the United States and also in Europe and the Middle East, in and near Jerusalem. I was back to the Middle East again in my twenties, in Yemen, and I lived a bit in Malaysia in my thirties and now I live in New Zealand, where I am officially a transnational, two-passport person. So to be from transplace, to be a transplace person, is something that many people have experienced in different ways – I just happened to have experienced it from the get-go, so I never have a satisfactory answer to that foundational greeting question: Where are you from? Ok, where were you raised? But where are you *really* from? Where were you born? The questions continue, like we're going to get there one way or another. I give various answers – my mother's womb, that's where I am from, or whatever answer satisfies that moment. I do think the different experiences of not being from one place are important to give names to, and transplace poetics is something I've recently started talking more about: I am thinking about what it means to articulate an artistic in-between placement that is not transitional, not en route between or among decided places or art modes or languages, but that situates in constellated multiplicity.

And speaking of languages, transplace poetics also plays into that for me – although most of my writing is in Englishes, it's very much inflected by having acquired smatterings of other languages across time, including both studying them and inhabiting the semiotics of alternative graphemics, you know, but also things like being a teenager involved in a religion that had me speaking in tongues. What it means to loosen your tongue from temporal languages to a spiritual babble approaching communicative music definitely informs what happens with me with language. I guess I'm also translingual, in that sense – not multilingual in the way that you speak five distinct cultural languages, but much more amorphous and mixed together: it's as though I have one big vat and all the languages go into the same vat. I don't have a lot of control over it. Some of you were present last Monday when I read from my newest book *The Long White Cloud of Unknowing* that has explicit multi-lingualisms.

But *Tomorrowland* really doesn't, to take up that part of your question – it's a different kind of thing. When I composed that book I wasn't yet confident in being from transplace; I felt a kind of shyness, even a kind of embarrassment at not having a proper origin to offer up when people asked that "where are you really from?" question. But that doesn't mean *Tomorrowland* is not a transplace book – I think you are right that it is. I composed it in the wake of being wrenched to a new region entirely; my partner and I made a decision to move from our tenured university jobs in the United States and go to New Zealand, for deliberate political and cultural reasons, and then I was processing that huge change because I hadn't lived in Oceania before. So that was a real kind of rupture of my principally transatlantic and Judeo-Christian-Islamic background into this other strongly different set of formations, and Pacific island formations.

After having been there for some years I started to get ready to perceive a little better and recently was able to articulate not only my theory of distributed centrality but also my shared and learned sense of the ocean as a positive place, not just a crossing point or a nothing or a wet bridge. I wrote about that in my introduction to a 2017 anthology I edited, *A TransPacific Poetics*, with co-editing from Sawako Nakayasu, and I'm sure that transplace poetics partly gets articulated out of that moment of thinking. It's easy for humans to think that only land matters, hence only some kind of positivist definite stand-on-able something matters while other things are in-between. Transplace is to give movement and mixing a place, to call out its *emplacedness*.

Hannah Van Hove: That's a really interesting idea, the in-between as a productive place... I was wondering about the notion of the 'in-between' in relation to genre. A lot of the texts you've written could be described as hybrid or genre-bending works where you incorporate different modes of writing. I wondered how you go about writing and whether you engage with that idea of genre as you write. Do you think of your work, for example, in terms of it being poetry, or poetics? Or how would you describe your own work and how do you position your writing in terms of debates around genre?

Lisa Samuels: One of the things I am committed to – not because other ways of doing it are wrong, but because that’s how my art and my mind work – is expanded representation. I want to contribute to the work of dispersing the kind of solar system version of representation in which the central sun of syntactically normative, grammatically complete and stylistically masterful persuasive rhetoric tells us what is real, right? Those clear crystal sentences that tell us where reality is, what something ‘really means’ in perfectly legible language – believing in that system posits that as we move away from this central sun of perfect accurate representation, we enter penumbra of disclarity, multiple penumbras of unclarity: the further we get away, the more unclear we are. This ideology of representation I vehemently dispute, and when I teach, I very slowly try to unpack this ideology and say look, so we think that there’s this thing where language makes sense and the world makes sense and language is going to explain to us that the world makes sense and that when things are not written in that way, they’re unclear, but – for reasons that have to do with your question about genre – I want to say that all representation, all language is *meaningful*. Every way of using language is a version of representation: you can call it quantum mimesis, you can call it poetry, you can call it rhythm-forward, you can call it dance gesture with sonics, you can talk about sound itself as having meaning, and those are all versions of representations not falling away from accuracy. This is one of my ethically motivated, and also artistically felt, experiences with language.

Another way of thinking about that is the notion of language being social. Language is not coming out of kind of a solitude single origin in which I stand there and something extrudes like a spider thread coming only from me. I think of my work with language as being quite conduit-like, like language as dreaming itself through fairly visionary activities of openness to the creative moment, if you want to think of it that way, though it happens in so-called critical creativity as well. Language is completely social, it is a shared set of energies; language is not mine, none of the words that I have used at this moment did I invent, right, nor am I pre-thinking the orders in which I’m going to say

them; this room itself is drawing out certain conversational energies and we don't have ways of understanding all those energies but they're not crazy, they make multiple kinds of sense. Part of this, frankly, in terms of expanded representation and my approach to art is also about expanding the possibility of human telling, because I find that often people experience their lives as fairly lonely because they think: my own life feels chaotic and I don't know what things mean and I don't know what I don't want or I want to talk about all fifteen of these things and I have to make these choices and do these cutaway things and all this un-allocated meaning stuff, you know, has not got enough storage for itself. So-called experimentation in language is partly involved in an effort to create a whole bunch of stories that aren't necessarily stories that make normative sense, stories that participate in our performed expansions of what it means to live and think.

Hannah Van Hove: Perhaps here it would be useful if we talked about the definition of 'soft text' from your essay 'Soft Text and the Open Line'?

Lisa Samuels: Yes, so when we were setting this up, we talked not only about expanded performance – which I hope we can come back to because there will be a performance here – and adaptation, intertextuality, intermediality, but also about soft text. I published in 2018 an essay, online at *Axon* journal, called 'Soft Text and the Open Line,' and I'll speak from a few excerpts. Soft text is a critical neologism, which is mostly the way I work when I write essays – I want to talk about transplace poetics or expanded representation or 'subjective correlatives' or 'wild dialectics' and so I try to explain what I think when those things come to me. So: soft text is potential text arising within language users and our interactions with ourselves [long pause] amidst surfaces, other persons, and events of living.

I paused there because in that interval a lot of soft text happened: language happened and wasn't spoken out loud – maybe some of it was written down, but the parts that weren't spoken out loud, that you were thinking and that you weren't writing down, are all soft text. I think of us as

animalingual – earlier I wrote this obsessive novel called *Tender Girl*, she is a special kind of *humanimal*, a shark human, and lately I have been thinking about us as *animalingual*, a conjoined word, and in that animalingual nature, soft text is happening all the time, right? It's a text that is silently formulated or that never quite materializes in visible relations, in speaking, publishing or other 'hard text' forms – which I use as a contrastive term. Soft text is the invisible textuality of potential language, language that stays within the mind in the moment, its visibility or auralness imagined but never incarnated as hard text. Hard text is inscribed or uttered; it stays the potentiality in soft text even as soft text hovers around the lines with alternate instance – we'll use that maybe as a segue to perform in a second. So soft text is the alterity, ghost, futurity, the prefiguration and the potential otherness of the hard text line; in other words possibility intrinsically exceeds actuality, thus there's always more soft text than hard text anywhere and at any time. Possibility is always more than any actuality, right? – the possible numbers of columns of chairs in this room far exceed the actual number. That kind of contrast is just a state of things, what's present and what's absent and how those are considered.

Hannah Van Hove: I was just thinking of your work *Anti M*, which has been described as a work of 'omitted prose'. I really love this idea of omission and wondered to what extent we might think of it in terms of highlighting soft text? In this book, there's a lot more white space, for example. Does this highlight the prose, the words that are omitted, the idea of things lacking in a sense?

Lisa Samuels: Oh, I am not sure they're lacking But, yes, yes...

Hannah Van Hove: I guess omitted in one way suggests that they're not the same thing but the idea of soft text is all about potentiality, right? So perhaps there is a kind of tension there - how do we navigate that idea of omission?

Lisa Samuels: Whew, that's a big question – we're opening several boxes here really. *Anti M* is my only memoir, an experimental memoir of childhood; that's me on the cover at a rock concert at the age of seven. I originally wrote a long memoir, and then I took out most of the words. At first I left the remainder of the words in the same locations that they occupied before the other words had been taken out around them, and then I had this pain of eco-conscience about the use of paper and I squeezed out a lot of space so it wouldn't be too long, lots of blanks space or so-called wasted paper, okay that's a bit outrageous artistically but whatever, so that's part of why *Anti M* looks like that.

It's worth saying that the whole process of writing *Anti M*, from first writings to the accepted book, took fifteen years, so it's a special case. The omissions, the omitted prose there is quite different from soft text potentiality that happens in the areas around text that isn't written like that. Soft text veers, is interpretable and delineable, in different ways.

However, like many writers my first step of revision, or re-writing – and when I teach writing, and you all may have similar experience, I point out the three overall steps of composition and then revision and then there is editing which is much later – my principal revision is omission. The kind of visionary writing that I happen to do, in composition, creates huge swaths of texts and then I almost always take things out and think about shaping and shaping and selecting and movement and sound and pacing. That's why I suppose, to get back to your earlier question about how I write, I think of myself as a poet, because phrase sound and layout shaping and lingual increments that are not the same as normative communicative utterances of sentences is something I do much more, even when I do write sentences. I am thinking now about Anne Carson, the bits you were showing us earlier, Helena,¹ and how much they look like Ron Silliman's 'the new sentence' that kind of jumps and pivots between prompts, sentence to sentence. So even when I am writing something that looks like sentences I'm thinking of the gaps between, but there it becomes more both referentially abstract and temporally

¹ This is a reference to Helena Van Praet's presentation at the CLIC symposium 2019 entitled 'Genre Developments in the 21st Century: Contributions by Anne Carson'. For the article version of this presentation, see 'Genre Developments in the 21st Century: Representation and the Network in Anne Carson's *Float*' in this issue of the *Journal for Literary and Intermedial Crossings*.

compressed, or juxtaposed, so it's quite different from the kind of phrasal imaginal work that I might do in a poetry line. Okay, also linking to your earlier question about do I write in a genre when I write, which is such an interesting question because you know, in a manner of thinking, there is no such thing as a genre, right, there are classificatory systems that bookstores and libraries and critics need to come up with in order to talk about things and they're not meaningless because they have to do with communicative strategies and cultural power and uptakes of understanding or perceptions of things being more like art or more like critical work or scholarly work. But I do know that – and I was thinking about this when you said about Anne Carson having two desks – often my critical and my creative writing are like REM sleep for each other, each one supports a kind of visionary work invisibly for the other – and I'll stop here and go back to you – yet I do think that when I am writing creatively I am much more *compelled*, much more impelled, and more, in a certain way, social visionary than I am when I am being a critic, when I'm writing theory, when I feel like I have to explain things.

Hannah Van Hove: Okay, I am wondering if maybe now, we should move on to the performance?

Lisa Samuels: Okay, let me just look at this for one second. I'm going to do a little something before that other thing we planned, because... yeah. I am thinking about sound arguments, silent objects as dialectical prosthetics and what they have to do with the materiality of the multiplication of the potential for soft text. I can say more about that. I am going to do two different versions of multiplying the potential of soft text, vis-à-vis *Tomorrowland*. First I am going to just read a bit, without what we could call embellishment or accompaniment, and then I am going to read with/against a short clip from the CD version of the work. Partly this is for a question of contrast.

[Performance by Lisa Samuels](#)

Lisa Samuels: Okay, so that's a version of a performance, and apropos of the question in the seminar last week, clearly that performance was unpremeditated, except in the sense of picking a clip and thinking about reading as it were 'against' the articulation that the CD does of the entirety of the *Tomorrowland* book, one word after another. So this new dialogic counterplay creates a work that you could say various things about: did it exist before?, well perhaps; but it's definitely an extension of the potentiality that exists almost infinitely in the recombinatorials of the text.

Hannah Van Hove: Thank you. Thank you so much for that performance. Following on from what you were saying there, it was, this idea of, of, reading with/against the sound recording and the soundscape very much highlights the potentialities of the written piece, so I was wondering in terms of what we're talking about earlier in relation to soft text and in relation to the written text, in terms of performance, do you very much think then of performing your work as having to be always different in order to steer away or to defy this idea of there being one particular reading?

Lisa Samuels: That's an interesting question, because in a certain way it is easy for me to say yes, I always want to refresh myself, you know, making fun of myself a little bit there in the modernist vein, but there is a lot of truth to that: I want to keep the art and my connections with it alive. At the same time, I have some performing background – when I was young I did some singing, and sometimes in my performances I sing poems, sometimes scoring those in advance. I have a couple of poems memorized for which I know basically the key I want to start in and the directions that I want to go. But even there I find myself departing from the loose score because – to put this in a kind of a flat dualistic way that we can challenge later – in Anglo literary history Wordsworthian perfections trump Blakean brokenness, right? And I am definitely on the side of Blake: I prefer the room for human desire and error that the broken leaves open. So when I see things that are too perfect then, as Laura Riding said about Virginia Woolf, when I read her it affects me like an exquisitely ripe pimple on

someone's face: I just want to squeeze it and have done!, and that's a gross image but it gets across this abhorrence for Laura Riding, a kind of abject bodily response to issues of power and representational completeness in various kinds of prose methodologies in the 1920s and 30s. But it's also an interesting question because I am also – and I'm sure everyone in this room will understand this for themselves – a perfectionist; I feel when something is interesting and I am confident about it, in the work that I make and like. And I am just an example of art happening, right, so when something happens in art in that way, in writing as we're talking about it now, then that partly gets at the balance of hard text and soft text: that question, how do you balance the two? How to foster the in between with what's scored? And I would say that it depends on the work that you are carrying out – we can certainly say that a text that looks like a normative paragraph on a fully complete page doesn't have as much explicit room for soft text potentiality as a page that, you know, looks like either *Tomorrowland* or *Anti M* where you have a more explicitly interrupted-visual sense. Yet in performance it's also question of wanting to make, or feeling compelled to make with my body and the sound and time, soft text potentialities that are not just about the visual page.

Hannah Van Hove: And so, the bell for example as a kind of dialectical prosthetic... Would you mind enlarging on that idea – what does the addition of these elements add?

Lisa Samuels: So partly they interrupt notions of intentionality and unidirectionality and the *univocal*, right; one-voicedness. The sound object comes in to – well for example, this one is new, I did it just this year: I went to a bicycle shop in September and oh, this wonderful bell, I love the bell, and then the person who worked there very kindly mounted it on a cut section of a bicycle handle. So it's completely removed from its normative function, and maybe I can put it on a bicycle and make it 'useful' someday! Anyway I like to do a lot of ambient work, and in that case I was reading in Cambridge Massachusetts and I went to a Cambridge bicycle shop. Here I haven't really had that

opportunity but oh right, I did, with the stick, that was my ambient sound work on Monday – I like to have something that comes in from a fragment of the space where I am, so that then it becomes a contextual emplacement with unpremeditated ambient prosthetics, right? And then that joins me contextually to the scene in ways that I can't control, I can't perfect. Take away that urge to perfect, but also join me to the context of otherness that I am coming into, when I perform for that particular moment as on Monday. That piece was perfect, a piece of wood from a building structure that was just lying on the ground in the rain when I walked into the building where I was going to perform, and it just rocked and it made a nice rocking sound on the floor, right there. Okay, so that's some of the things I would say about dialectical prosthetics.

Hannah Van Hove: Thanks, that helps to clarify it. As you were reading and performing there, I was struck by the way in which this kind of reading *against* was highlighting the plurality of the we-voice in *Tomorrowland* and we have, at different points, not a universal voice maybe, but a we-voice coming in and I was wondering to what extent you might think of the narrator as a character? Or you've talked about Eula, Jack etc as, rather than strictly representing a character, they constitute- what did you call it – a named...?

Lisa Samuels: A named principle...

Hannah Van Hove: A named principle, right. Similarly, should we think of the narratorial voice as – how should we think about narratorial voice?

Lisa Samuels: That's a very nice question, thank you. It makes me think of a quotation up on the screen earlier today – we had a lot of interesting talks, I can't recall this precisely but I think it was Lyotard along the lines of narrative always having a speaker take us into an experience. But I don't

feel that way about the speaker position – I feel that language has multiple subjectivities that are not only humanoid; I experience language as a set of relational powers and forces. Certainly activated by and engaged in with humanoids, humans, *humanimals*, but with the pervasive animistic quasi-agentive articulations that can be made by any language, coming out of and into any kind of context-space. In this case it's *Tomorrowland*, and I'm thinking in terms of your question about writers who have considered wanting to have pure perceptibility, perception without eyes, you know? No eyes, no looking but pure perception. This is a situation of decoupling from the I being in control – and by the way I think of this as a characteristic utterance rather than a strange one, a characteristic post-foundational theoretical articulation. A great deal of the work that language does is not controlled by our intentions and drives. In a sense, the present-day striving for the authentic 'I' that says something definite, you know, in the modernist sense of T.S. Eliot's objective correlative, that correlates with the intentionality of the author and is able to be read by the reader with a perfect re-establishment of authorial intention – with all due respect, that's not my interest and I'm skeptical of the control that attitude exerts over the articulation of identity and ideas and language and experience. In fact one of my early theoretical neologisms is the 'subjective correlative' [in Samuels's introduction to her edition of Laura Riding's *Anarchism Is Not Enough*, California 2001] which sets aside Eliot's idea as just one way of thinking about language; it doesn't get to have the only power.

So I'm obviously doing some associative thinking as I consider your question about narratorial voice, working toward the 'we' in *Tomorrowland* – but these associatives are part of the point. Another part of the complex answer has to do with colonial/post-colonial positions, though again it matters to qualify that because I don't think we really are *post* colonial – more colonial, trans-colonial, and *Tomorrowland* is a transmigration text in that context. It features a we that is investigating movements of guilt in a sense of *emplacement*, where we are. I notice in the part of my mind that is thinking about voice that it's also a matter of what voice *interacts* with – in other words, what is the book 'about'? The beginning is the conceptual airplane and in the end we're at the water: there are these really strong

movements of a whole bunch of different subjectivities, if you will, making these kinds of actions take place. The ships and the stones are also speaking, and that kind of mystic animism has to do with how we engage with the earth and how the earth engages with us and how subjectivity is not so freaking anthropomorphic all the time – language gives us one of the ways to mediate the not-only-anthropomorphic nature of subjectivity; the earth is not just about humans, you know? And language is like, like a stone on the ground, or a building or a wind, or a cloud or land or blood or water, and that's the work that language can do on the page in a text like *Tomorrowland*. But that is different from something like my novel *Tender Girl*, where there's a different sense – there this third person mediates, with penumbras of textual affect exposing themselves around and with her, through the picaresque of that novel; it's a different set toward narratorial works.

Hannah Van Hove: I was just thinking about the implications then, of that kind of thinking in terms of how we think about identity; it has huge implications for kind of received notions of identity when we start unravelling the way we usually think about a character etc, and I was wondering, you know - does that also relate to your idea of *transplace*, which can also be thought of as very politically radical, to not be from somewhere is, especially in the present age, goes against how we perceive of people and identity, so yeah, that's really just a comment rather than a particular question...

Lisa Samuels: Yes, well, that's how it feels to me, and as I say I certainly do not feel solo in this. You know, we are making language, and I think the resistance you point to is also an argument against the artificial belonging that nation-states insist upon: the instrumentalizing of our identities and our *identitarianism* towards and within nation-state instrumentalization. So yeah, I do feel that it's radical in that sense, the work that language is doing with outlook and position, and your comment also ties in with my theory of distributed centrality, right – in which I want to eliminate discussions of margins: there are no margins, everything is a centrality, and not only humans. Thinking in that way is meant

to undo the power of thinking that all the important stuff is happening elsewhere, which can cause a sense of the abjection of the self in relation to some powerful other. So that's part of what distributed centrality wants to do, and I think it definitely relates with being a *transplaced* person, and also to displacing the continual anthropocentric notions of earth forces, you know; it also ties with things like New Zealand giving legal personhood status to bodies of water and bodies of land, those kinds of political moves, it definitely ties in with that as well.

Hannah Van Hove: Thanks, I'm wondering now if – we also want you all to be able to ask some questions, so shall we move on to that part? Does anyone have any questions for Lisa?

Q1: Yeah, can you please exemplify the difference between biography and your new point ... auto, no, autobiography?

Lisa Samuels: Oh, bioautography. So, bioautography is basically footing the body first in the story. In relation to Lyn Hejinian's book *My Life* I used the term autography, which I imagined as language writing itself or the story of a *language* I, the story of a writing self, rather than of a socially normative sort of self. And bioautography is a term that I coined in writing about body-art-work – that kind of stuff was very intensely happening in the sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties, and in an essay I write about Carolee Schneemann, who was a US body-arts person, and I particularly evoked her photo and language book *Vulva's Morphia*. So in bioautography you're putting your body first and I am really interested in that, because I'm interested in what I've called the body rights movement and the putting forward of the body and the rights of the body and its existence in public space. There are particular gender ways and also particular kinds of violence ways with bodies, and leading with the body in writing is to put an emphasis on the self that is different from the notion of an abstract and continuous narrativized social continuity in terms of autobiography. So it's writing a body,

bioautography is writing the body self. And, you know, our obsessions are so continual when we figure them out: oh, *that's* what I care about, and I want to do it again. So the openness of the body and also the liquidity of the body and the blood of the body and also the wet electric of the body are absolutely recurrent in my work. I see it in *Tomorrowland* as well though I don't plan it that way ...

Q2: So *Tomorrowland* can be read as a bioautography of your migration to New Zealand, and does Eula represent you?

Lisa Samuels: Does Eula represent me? Well. In the film version the only reason that I play Eula is because we did not have any money, so the director was like: you play Eula, I play Fasti. And then my friend Duriel played Jack and his friend Anja played Manda and then a couple of my graduate students and now arts colleagues, Kelly and Tru, play the Sirens; but that doesn't end the story. The way I came up with the name Eula is that when I started to write *Tomorrowland* I'd just gotten a new computer, and when you open a new computer it says End User Licence Agreement and I got excited and said Eula, that's the name, and I started to write like it. Eula is a digital amorphous androgynous you know, *charactericity* principle, but she's not even called a she, she's not me, and actually I would say, if I were going to be a critic about *Tomorrowland*, I probably would say that there's also a narrator, or there are multiple narratorial layers; but Eula is not a narrator, Eula is more a character-ish substance, rather than being narratorial.

Q3: I was wondering, since you were first talking about writing the body, if you would then perhaps say that you are an advocate of feminine writing in the tradition of political initiation; are you using that word in that specific tradition or...

Lisa Samuels: Oh well, yeah, probably. But I don't only come out of European traditions, and I would say that for me there are other kinds of layers, but yes is really the best answer, so: yes, I reckon I probably am a radical feminist.

Q4: I don't have a question about literature, but about ecology in fact. Because in the beginning of the speech you said nature of the earth is not anthropomorphic is it? From this point of view, what do you think gives rights to animals, to trees, to.. you said something about is it good or...

Lisa Samuels: Is it good? Yeah, I think that one of the points of distributed centrality is twofold – well, it's a lot of folds, but twofold in terms of your question: one is that these are human values and ideas that we're talking about, that's all that we can take hold of, right? What we can talk about from our bodies and our perspectives and our cultures. So I can speak about what the lion might think, what the stone might think, but we have a responsibility to take care of those things that can't speak and to accord them their own versions of centrality. Of course this is a radical ideal, and like all good radical ideals it's something we have to continually remind ourselves, in my view. I speak in this way, and figure out how to negotiate the ethics of distributed centrality, but it's impossible to entirely implement because not every – you know, the ceiling doesn't have a voice, this floor doesn't have a voice, and what are the kinds of care in the earth that you can actually implement in a particular context, given the radical non-homogeneity of both any kind of elements on earth, that is to say kinds of being on earth, and kinds of cultures and cultural values, right. So this is the second angle, the angle of impossibility – and I know that distributed centrality is an ideal: it's a kind of belief *strategy* that I come at, that I bring to things. So that's what I would say about that.

Hannah Van Hove: I'm afraid we've run out of time. The drinks and nibbles are beckoning but if anyone has any further questions, you still have a chance to catch Lisa at the reception.

Lisa, thank you so much for sharing your insights and performing your work. It was an absolute pleasure to talk with you.

Lisa Samuels: And with you – and to be here.