

## Book Launch Gerry Bibby's *The Drumhead*

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From: Natasha Soobramanien  
Date: Tue, 13 Jan 2015 12:04:15 +0000  
Subject: Witness report  
To: lukewilliams

Dear Luke

You asked me why I was struggling so to write this witness report for If I Can't Dance.

It's true that I do seem to have made the task difficult for myself. I guess this arose because I had no sense of what was expected from this document - or rather, from me as a witness. What was it I being asked to witness? Here are my notes:

“Wine-dark gravy. Flaming torches. M\*A\*S\*H. Bibby = HotLips, I am Radar. mint tea. A group of women bulked up in jumpers, working with fine thread. Merch. Helen Cixous as a page of concrete poetry. Professors performing themselves. Transporting seeds from Australia to Amsterdam. Seeds having body clocks/jetlag. The respective costs of visas and general immigration beaurocracy across different European countries (2 grand vs 60 Euros). The desert near a military camp. An art reserve near a nuclear submarine base. Writing a novel and becoming a feminist in the process. Therapy offered in the reading room. Fiction seen as antithetical to activism. Liveblogging (witnesses?) from conferences can misrepresent. Writing in a 2nd language can be a useful constraint. Soft focus leaves and the sound of... drilling? Traffic? Who can live in a space like that now? The going rate for cleaning bogs in a boomtown. Ladies and Gentlemen! A gentle and encouraging presence. The face of a corrupt cherub. Language battles in a country I missed the name

of, the politics of writing in one or the other. 'An organisation that is structurally Feminist' (when have I ever been in one of those? All girl convent boarding school is at once the closest - and furthest - I've been to this...). The catacombs of Paris. Power trousers."

I only attended the launch evening of the performance series for Edition V - Appropriation and Dedication so all I had to comment on resided within those few hours: the location, the food, the crowd, the conversations, the performances or fragments of these that I witnessed, the speeches, the reading.

And now it sounds like I went to a wedding - certainly there was something ritualistic or ceremonial about the whole evening; something celebratory, but mutedly so. Because if this was the launch of something, it was also the end of something: the end of an intense, six month process of working with Gerry Bibby on his first novel, *The Drumhead*. I use the term 'working with' loosely. If ever I was a witness it was to Gerry's writing process, with all the sense of gravity/helplessness/concern/amazement that the word 'witness' itself bears witness to.

It was a joy.

Natasha

This visitor report by Natasha Soobramanien was written at the invitation of If I Can't Dance, and follows the book launch of Gerry Bibby's novel *The Drumhead*, that took place during the Performance Days festival, 27 November - 3 December 2014, Amsterdam.