

THE

pluralist

A DUAL ISSUE ON  
THE THEMES OF SELF  
AND OTHER; HOW  
THEY CONVERGE /  
DIVERGE, HOW WE  
RELATE TO SELF AND  
OTHER IN SHIFTING  
TIMES, AND WHERE  
THERE IS SLIPPAGE  
BETWEEN THE TWO.

#2A

Self /

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# EDITORS' LETTER

At the end of last year, whilst tensions elsewhere were running high, a seemingly innocuous phrase was doing the rounds, on Twitter; "Are you in the right headspace to receive information that could potentially harm you?" The statement, originally posted by a well-meaning user, was supposed to be an offering of advice on how to negotiate the boundaries of potentially difficult conversations. Now, reappropriated as the caption-cum-punchline for stories about global conflict, reality TV shows, the royal family and personal dating woes, it has become a meme.

For some reason, this set of words, in this order, had struck a chord with the amorphous humour-chamber of the internet. It hinted at a new communicative landscape, one where we might have become so alienated from one another that we need to deploy stock phrases before off-loading our emotions or thoughts. One where we are so obsessed with forging appropriate boundaries that we can't genuinely relate to one another without passing through a series of prescribed emotional checkpoints. All of this, wrapped up in the uncomfortable fact that we're saturated in harmful information, in perhaps unprecedented quantities, and holding back the tide is impossible anyway. "Are you in the right headspace to receive information that could potentially harm you?" Are we ever? Do we have a choice?

So when we were considering the possible themes for this issue of *the pluralist*, it felt important to think about those boundaries. To re-interrogate what passes for 'self', what passes for 'other',

and what passes between the two. This issue includes work, for instance, on the themes of self-desire, of self-destruction on a planetary scale, and there are also literal self-portraits. We've enjoyed receiving more visual submissions and documentation of performance art, and work from across all programmes — the self in our practice is not only implied, but can be documented literally and physically. (We hope you are in the right headspace to enjoy it too).

Continuing this line of thought about what passes for 'self' and 'other' — we decided to publish this issue of *the pluralist* in two physical parts. Design motifs indicate that content within these issues is loosely organised under the framework of 'self' and 'other' — whilst also implicitly acknowledging the impossibility of making such distinctions. So, please take a look at both issues and our experiment with duality.

For the next issue we are exploring '**THE FAKE**' and '**THE REAL**'. Send us your notes, pitches, questions, ideas, writings, or visual submissions to [thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com).

the editors  
lucy, harri + eilis

## Some grey memories

When I was 12-ish, we were walking in Paris with both my parents, passing by shop windows. We stopped sometimes to take a look at whatever was on display behind the glass. At some point, we ended up looking and commenting at wedding dresses. The classic white, ornate, glittery, lacey ones. The kind that tend to look like extravagant pastries covered in whipped cream. I said to my parents that I thought white dresses were garish and looked like chunks of meringue. If at some point I got married or anything in that likeness, it would be in grey.

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I arrived in the UK in 2018 on a Wednesday afternoon. My luggage was too heavy to be carried by my two arms alone up the stairs. Around 5PM I went out to do grocery shopping with my new flatmate. I was dizzy with all the information I was taking in, all at once and as much as I could, about that new place I was going to live in. Where is the bank, where is the supermarket, where is the vegetables and fruits aisle. I bought a small piece of smoked cheddar and ate it all, once the items I had bought were sitting in their newly established place, either in the cupboard or in the fridge. It tasted both delicious and gross, and was weird enough in a way that makes you want to taste it over and over just for the sake of feeling this confusion of flavour again and again. It felt like eating coal and tangy cheese at the same time.

During the weekend, I went for a walk to explore the neighborhood. My room was set up and I had ten days ahead of

me before school would start. I walked pass the supermarket and ended up in the commons. I had lived far from home for five years already. This was not the first time I moved to a new country. But it wasn't home yet. I knew nobody here, with the exception of my godfather living in Richmond. Experience was telling me that all would turn ok and eventually into a familiar scenery. I was still naturally worried, not knowing how things would play out, if I would manage my MA, how I would get on with new people.

The sky was very grey, with heavy curvy clouds. It was the most beautiful grey sky I had ever seen, with dark areas almost blue smeared across a luminous backdrop. I decided it was a good omen. I was now living in a place with the most perfect grey skies. So nothing too bad could happen.

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My grandfather used to say that most white horses are actually grey horses, as you can't find a horse without at least one black hair. I think that even if a horse doesn't have a single dark hair in its coat, it still is not truly a white horse.

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I wasn't planning to buy my favorite shirt. I was just out to get dress trousers. Actually, I was just out to buy something, anything, and dress trousers seemed like the most reasonable option at the moment. A clothing item—self indulgence—but a useful one—practical mind.

Everybody tells you that you shouldn't buy things to make yourself feel better, and they're probably right. And I don't really care.

Once my brand new trousers were in my bag, I wondered around Oxford Street for a bit. And at some point I decided that a white shirt would be a nice thing to pair them with. I walked into the shop, and then found my favourite shirt. Not white, but pale grey. Soft, slightly fuzzy flannel. The perfect combination between the colour and the texture. A grey tint on a grey material. A very grey shirt. The sleeves a bit too long, so I would have to wear them rolled up.

I bought it and put it in my bag with the trousers. I walked out of the shop and into a puddle. I cried in the tube on the way home.

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For a long time, when I was told that my eyes were blue, I often corrected the person the remark was coming from, telling them that no, they were just grey.



# THE DESIRE TO POSSESS OUR MULTIPLE SELVES

Do I possess you?  
Can we desire our selves?

Our Selves I write as in being with multiple selves, who interact within, who talk to each other; a body, a mind of us and our.

Us/we are partners in crime. We share our physicality, our corporeality; sounds, visions and lived experiences.

Some layers that constitute us remain disguised to the exterior and blurred to our multiple selves. I want to find out what might turn us on about us/we.

We desire others whilst knowing we can't own them in flesh. I wonder if it is possible to desire you—since I already have you; we already have each other. And after all, we only desire what we don't possess.

My curiosity grows over our capability to possess our own body, our thoughts, our vulnerability and our fragility. It seems that even though these are supposed to be ours, they respond mainly to expectations and conditions created by others.

Could it be that we desire to be desired by others to compensate for the impossibility of possessing our multiple selves?

We don't perceive our biological condition, we sense our body in relation to the ideas we have about what it means to be us, what we think it means to exist, what we believe it is to be a human being.

By playing with our flesh and masturbating as we picture the image of ourselves, we can recognize the entangled layers which constitute our transitional being.

There grows a desire to discover what is constantly changing within, and fantasize about what we are and what we could be. I want to get to know us more so that I can touch you deeper, embrace our deepest fears, be disgusted by you, feel embarrassed to be us, distance from us, and after, desire to be you/us again.

# SHANA MOULTON AT ZABLUDOWICZ COLLECTION: AN ACCOUNT OF WOMEN FALLING (AND GETTING UP)

By  
malbina janasić

Fig 1  
Attacking the Paparazzi, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-lists/britney-spears-a-life-in-photos-13073/attacking-the-paparazzi-2007-25459/>

Fig. 2  
Pipilotti Rist, *Ever is Over All*, 1997 (still). <https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2016/10/ever-if-over-all-rist.jpg>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2801-pipilotti-rist>

<sup>2</sup> Archey, Karen. Pipilotti Rist. *Frieze*, May 2016. Accessed Nov 19.

## one women falling

2007 went down in history as the darkest year for Britney Spears. Divorce, losing custody over her kids, rehab and ending up in a mental institution, all led to her infamous mental breakdown. Photographs of her shaving her hair off became a symbolic image of the enraged, fallen woman. The images acted as an admonition, no one could unanimously agree against what. (Money? Fame? Femininity? And feeling incredibly fucking angry?)

I remember seeing those photos in gossip magazines as a teen: they were haunting. Scary. It was probably the first non-conforming image of a woman I had experienced. At the time, I assumed her shaved head was a punishment for deprivation of her femininity. That together with her long, blonde locks she had also lost her dignity. Today these images move me and make me feel empowered. Britney, quite literally and rightly so, *lost it*.

From a political perspective that point in time wasn't particularly special for feminism or girl power. So much had already happened: suffrage, women's

liberation movement, riot grrrl, intersectionality... Critics argued third-wave feminism was somewhat bland in comparison, pointing out its lack of cohesion and unified objective. It had also begun to move into the insubstantial sphere of the quickly spreading Internet, along with other ideologies, communication and culture: the fourth-wave was looming over.



Fig. 1  
Attacking the Paparazzi

The 2007 Britney wasn't an image of power, quite the reverse. She wasn't in a feminist punk band that wanted to abolish patriarchy and inequality. She didn't fight for rape and sexual harassment victims. Yet it is that exact image that stayed with me all these years. Britney was the last standing pillar, safeguarding the obsolete sexism of the 90's, a symbol of a fetishized woman: blonde with a perfect, sun kissed body, who isn't capable of being argumentative or – god forbid – violent. And the moment she cracked, the bubble of pop stars, teen magazines and straight up sexism cracked with her. What's so repulsive about female violence? Why is an image of a woman hitting rock bottom so jarring?



Fig. 2  
Pipilotti Rist, *Ever is Over All*, 1997 (still)

*Ever Is Over All*, a 1997 video artwork by feminist artist Pipilotti Rist, bears some resemblance to the 2007 Britney Spears images. "For Rist, showing vulnerability is a sign of strength on which she draws for inspiration."<sup>1</sup> In the video, Rist herself parades through a city, smashing car windows with a flower. But she is not angry: she looks beautiful, happy and free. Her action gets an approving nod and a smile from a policewoman walking past: women united in an act of destruction and anarchy. "Critics used works like these to brand Rist a narcissistic female vanity artist. That she had the audacity to use pop music in her videos also awarded her the label of naïve outsider, likening her work to populist dross on MTV."<sup>2</sup> Even though critically scolded, what Rist did was compelling. She generated a socially uncomfortable and harsh image: the image of female violence.

This popular conception that women aren't supposed to show their despair, their anger, that they aren't supposed to be broken, or human at all, feels like it could have just teleported the whole world back to Ancient Greece, where the term "wandering womb" (female hysteria) was coined. Women are mothers, after all, forgiving, tame and soft. They have to be cared for. Protected. They need men to carry them through the world, to fight wars for them, so they can be mothers. But it's not Ancient Greece, generations

Fig. 3  
Shana Moulton, Zabłudowicz  
Collection  
(still), 2019  
<https://elephant.art/back-to-school-special-eight-must-see-artists-for-september/>

<sup>3</sup> Hernanz, Clara. Artist Shana Moulton on creating a surreal, wellness-obsessed alter-ego. Dazed, September 2019. <https://www.dazeddigital.com/art-photography/article/46026/1/artist-shana-moulton-on-creating-a-surreal-wellness-obsessed-alter-ego>  
Accessed: 21 November 19.

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Julia Butterfly. Welcome. Julia Butterfly Hill. <https://www.juliabutterflyhill.com/> Accessed: January 2020.

of women fought for equality, and yet society seems barely changed. Images of women being emotional, strong, angry and, well, human, don't seem to have sunk in yet, and being so used to conforming, smiling, sexualized women, women as mothers and women as "reproductive bodies", it's impossible to forget Britney's 2007 breakdown. What's even harder to forget is that she didn't die. She got up and rose again.

london, october 2019  
cynthia's falls

A loud, high-pitched scream pierces the air in the main room of the gallery. It comes out of a speaker, about two feet below the main character onscreen - Cynthia. The sound, removed from the source - Cynthia's mouth, feels strangely disembodied, but amplified and dominant. Short lived. Cynthia fell, once again defeated by a pink tower of unrealistic expectations and Internet-induced anxiety.

Shana Moulton conceived Cynthia, her pyjama-wearing alter ego - in 2002, together with a series of videos collectively named "Whispering Pines". Her rises and falls are documented on video and shown on loop throughout the Zabłudowicz gallery space. She evokes a housewife, an "angel in the house or a madwoman in the attic"<sup>3</sup>, Rapunzel and sleeping beauty, and the Cynthia-side of me when I google "homemade face mask recipes" at 2 am.



Fig. 3  
Shana Moulton, Zabłudowicz Collection  
(still), 2019

Cynthia's eyebrows are permanently raised, giving her an expression that lies somewhere between confused, worried, and sad. She rarely seems fulfilled or satisfied, her pain - whether physical or not - is temporarily lifted after working out or bathing. But it always finds its way back, urging her to try new ways of battling anxiety, aches and low self-esteem.

She repeatedly falls from towers, tall trees and dream-like structures. In fact many of her falls resemble a bad dream about falling: everything unanchors, what's meant to be solid becomes fluid, what looks three-dimensional turns out to be a flat hologram. Inanimate objects become alive and encircle her, forcing her to comply with the image of a woman created by the capitalist society. Eventually she falls, defeated - she would die but she is immortal, forever looped and trapped in a pink tower.

the butterfly lady who went up and down

In 1996 Julia Lorraine Hill climbed an ancient redwood tree in a protest against deforestation and cutting down of Californian redwoods. She lived in the branches for 738 days, changing her name to Julia "Butterfly" Hill. During that time she became spiritually enlightened, empathetic, calm and focused. She devoted her life to fighting for an environmental cause.

In "Whispering Pines part 2" Shana Moulton portrays her as a beautiful and profound woman, with a butterfly painted on her face. She sings in a clear voice, embracing the tree, leading the way. She clearly strikes something in Cynthia, words of her song echoing in Cynthia's world over and over, even after she disappears. Cynthia departs, seeking the same spiritual enlightenment, seeking "her tree". Today Julia Butterfly Hill's homepage reads →

"Dear Friends,

*On December 18th, 1999, I returned to Terra Firma after over two years living aloft in the branches of my best friend, and best teacher, Luna.*

*I came down to a hurting world - constantly wanting and needing my help with everything they cared about. (...) And therefore the needs, wants, and calls on my time, person, and resources were, also, never ending.*

*I gave generously for over 15 years because of my deep love for all that connects us.*

*But the toll and price on me was too much. (...)*

*In the midst of all of my giving and supporting, i experienced brutal and painful beyond belief, personal challenges on every single level- emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, and financial.*

*(...) The weight is too much of a burden for one person to bear. (...) "*<sup>4</sup>

Similarly to Cynthia falling from a pink tower, Julia falls from her beloved tree with a high-pitched, surprised scream. Her successes are measured in the amount of environmental protests she started, in the amount of books she published, in the amount of wise and powerful words she had publicly given. But her spirituality and her successes weren't enough to save the whole world. For her it seemed like a defeat. Her strength seemed to have run out and she slowly disappeared from the public eye. Her recent blog posts mainly consist of her reliving the experience of spending two years on top of the ancient redwood, Luna, and offering life coaching via the website. Leading a normal life might seem hardly revolutionary, disappointing even after what she's accomplished. Life away from publicity doesn't scream an activist, a celebrity or a main character. Yet defying that, similarly to Cynthia - and similarly to other women who fell - her life doesn't end. She goes on, gently, patching up her wounds with bark of an ancient redwood tree. She goes on, living the best she can. She does go on and that's revolutionary enough.

# THIS IS NOT A CONSCIOUSNESS

Photo Series:  
nonextant family albums



(noun:/'kɒŋʃənsɪs/)

The fact of awareness by the mind of itself and the world.

Language is used to comprehend and navigate the world around us. It is also used to articulate our internal world to ourselves. The voice that exists in the mind as you read this text, the voice that exists in the mind as you reflect on your lived experience is not and will never be you. This is an illusion of symbolic interpretation.

Self-awareness, reflection, and imagination are understood here as a symptom of language.

Imagine: if an archer fires an arrow into the woods, but it passes too swiftly to be perceived, an observing mind will fill in the gaps between the two physical states (an arrow fired and an arrow landed). This imprints a dual sequence in memory. Our senses provide the capacity to turn this sequence into comprehension; through imagination we form a story. Enough of these sequences create an overarching narrative, and this, in turn, becomes us.

The self is a story retroactively told.

(noun:/'kɒŋʃənsɪs/)

The linguistic distance between changing states.

# YOU BE ME AND I'LL BE JANET

By  
judith hagan

## GUIDANCE, or, READER'S NOTES:

Reader fills in for the writer who is filling in for Janet Frame, the author.

Sections beginning 'W' are transcribed from an audio recording made on a visit to 39 Grove Hill Road, where Frame spent three of the noisiest years of her London life.

The 'she', that other in this game can be considered Janet, if you like.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Prizes, a short story by Frame, talks of the claims people make on one another's interiors.

<sup>2</sup> I don't know you, do I? I don't really know you. I mean I know who you are, but I don't really know you.'. Janet, quoted by M.Money, in M.King's book.

So you realise, don't you, the farce of trying to catch her truth? But hey, you're here to do a job, so (you) swallow the directions and begin.

You look at a map, and see the pleasant shape of St. Francis Park. By the pleasantness of its shape, and by its proximity to Grove Hill Road, you decide that Janet would have come here, and that's where you'll begin.

But  
unsired by the map, the arrival is essentially glum.

The arrival is grimmed by a giant Sainsbury's breeding up a tangle of roads. Already your self is getting in the way of this thinking game. A lorry lets you cross, one road, and then another. The edges of your map prove easy to pass over.

Thanks, you think, thanks a lot.

You enter the park. You scan the marks that made up your map, that made the so-pleasant abstract. But the marks didn't sound the noises, didn't scratch the smells that occupy you now, didn't make the dogs with their children, or the wasps with their quarrels (all keeping you at the very edge of yourself) and all such busyness make a life of those lines and markings and edges.

A woman beams at you all-too-knowingly, and your memory replaces her face with Janet's, and you remember her story, Prizes, and think, *just what do you think you know about me?*<sup>1</sup> You think, also, about the other author you heard reading her, how that other author also felt,



sometimes, to be playing at Janet's edges.

*Where would she sit?* you think, and you try to choose somewhere quiet, but flinch at the impulse – was that me or Janet? It's starting to take.

*Wchildren the steely screams of children  
scythed down to bubbling yells of play  
at the roundabout. no cause for alarm,  
but she feels it anyway*

Those salad leaves, you know, the ones from your garden, are tough in their packed sandwich. You pull with your teeth, and they pull with their toughness, and all other fillings fall to your lap. You bet they survived all winter those leaves, out there under the mild city winter, covered with slush. You hope you washed them well enough. You hope it's safe to eat from city soil.

You think of Janet, her Snowman, Snowman, the story that found its feet in this park. You wonder (with difficulty, below

showers of eye-watering birch blossom – but Janet never mentioned allergies!) – you wonder about the stray cat from her letters, knowing it was a real cat, and whether its progeny populate the area. You decide to keep an eye out for cats.

*Wcars whip the air in the background,  
she chews in the foreground*

Janet reminds you of your middle sister when she was shy, or, of all you sisters really, grinning your way through all that awkwardness. You think the student you met lately, who's words you could hardly listen to because of her striking resemblance to your Janet. That absorbing mix of clumsy shyness that contrasts with a self-same acuity, wit, and assertiveness. What can a person know of a person anyway? People talk of love, but I think it's a mistake.<sup>2</sup>

You find, on this day especially, that there's a reminding of Janet in

<sup>3</sup> Janet's fist 'experience' with sex was in Ibiza while she was writing there in 1958.

<sup>4</sup> In one of Janet's letters, she wrote about how, out of anxiety, she arrived too early for a meeting with an affluent publisher, about how she was standing outside his home in the rain for an hour before, desperate for the toilet and too shy to arrive early.

everything. You've soaked yourself in her words, her thoughts.

*\\she opens her flask, and laps, the coffee has cooled enough not to make a smooth tongue rough. under direction from the wind, or the pollen, she takes a long and encompassing sniff*

You feel the feeling of having cycled far, of having sat down to rest in a sunny space, a bit too noisy, but in your own making, quiet. Along the coasts, and further abroad (you roll your 'r' here, a little affectedly) you find yourself seeking something out. A feeling of capacity, of being the master of your gate, of

*\\GROSS a RAT!*

[You are yourself again for a moment, as is the writer, and I'm sure, as is Janet.]

This is all very noisy, you think. And dirty. And I'm eating my lunch and a rat came below me. Oh gross! What if it bites me [your voice cracking] I'll die! You gather up your sandwich and snacks to shrink the rat's map of luck.

*\\scrumble of material, crunching and munching and more sniffing*

Ok,

*\\munching, chewing – salad leaves are hard to bite through so the whole sandwich is extroverted and eaten inside-out*

definitely don't stick your fingers in your mouth.

*\\brushes hands off, scuffles feet on the tarmac*

You make noises with your feet so the rats don't come back. Smart guys though.

They'll know we are no threat.

New leaf.

So this is Janet's turf, you think. This is what she saw; what she walked through en and off route to writing, to the Maudsley.

*\\continued lunch noises, increasing. a crescendo joined by microphone blasting up a breeze*

She wouldn't have had these songs in her head, silence being her thing, or boys far away in Montserrat that made her heart ache. Or maybe – that one in Ibiza? <sup>3</sup> In lives without much contact, small interactions get louder.

*\\wind ravages microphone*

Janet talked a lot about noises, of radios and television sets slowly populating her residence, her street. They made it difficult to work. That huge Sainsbury's wouldn't have been there, you think. You wonder if people yelled as much as they do now. You think guiltily of this morning, on the road – you were yelling too.

*\\interrupting with a mouth full of food, she says - but only when someone endangers my life!*

You begin to dislike this imposter.

Your mind is doing something interesting, naturally. Because you came here to do something with Janet, to think something with Janet, you're doing just that. But then, this place doesn't really contain any Janet. And the more you've studied her, the further you see yourself from the reality of her. The student, yesterday, told you about something R.D Laing wrote – that humans should be able to feel separate, separately thinking, and still to care

about each other. The further the distance between personalities, the further the leap of imagination, of humanity. The leap becomes more significant. The experience of schizophrenia, as described by Laing, is as valid an experience of reality as any other.

*\\chewing gets really irritating, is affected*

You see a bee with the longest, spikiest nose you've ever seen, very yellow, very indistinct stripes, so indistinct you think you've imagined them, and tiny, and like a bird, like a tiny hummingbird.

[Later, you look this up. It is *Bombylius major* – a parasitic bee-mimic – a fly that flicks its own eggs into a bee burrow that, once hatched, eat both bee and bee eggs. You are temporarily horrified by yourself, your mimicry.]

*\\biting her apple, chew chew, and cars drone out any other background*

You leave a little food for the ants, and, for the rats. You have no idea if that's something Janet would do, but it's something you would do, are doing. You will never be her, and you will never really be yourself, either.

On the move, your bike clicks out your walking pace, your feet fall out their steps, the many false steps towards Janet. You sigh lightly, inciting the incline of Dog Kennel Hill.

*\\children speaking in French, more drowning by cars, more confident apple-chews. lawnmowers become drones in audio flatness, but Janet could never have said that.*

You wonder about her bladder.<sup>4</sup>

You wonder how often it was too full, how often she felt discomfort, and you wonder too, about the sky. You put your apple in a dog waste bin. You feel dirty. You collect what you can about the place – the little camper van with a painted door, the old monkey puzzle tree, the old man with long hair and a suit that walks by with a smile, the American woman asking someone if they would water her lawn, the street names – Ivanhoe, Aven-dale, Pytchley and Quorn. You remember her lying about being vegetarian to appear more delicate, less greedy, less needy. You think of those sometimes-sneaked fish. You feel dirty.

*\\some kind of strimmer blows out all other sound, the wind joins in and she tries to talk over the buzz*

On the corner, it's a pub (a pub Janet mentions). Looking out the window is a knight dressed for battle, but resting. Ivanhoe – isn't that a Scottish book – it is! you think, thinks Janet.<sup>5</sup> A woman in her dressing gown walks by, ghostly.

*It was a pub*, you correct her. Now it's just apartments.

Pleasant talk, pleasant walk, you think, and now you're round the corner from her, where she once was living. You count to locate her.

*\\bicycle clicks*

Number 49, Number 51... you hope it's on the sunny side... Number 55... the gardens are too small for a snowman... there it is: Number 39.

*\\bicycle clicks to a halt, cars pass*

You stop. You wait, but there is nothing to be found here. You look down at the tiled path, you know that here her stepping crossed. Without a doubt, she saw these, touched these – and what? It impresses you, yes, but is it impressive? You once sat in the V&A library, hands turning the handwritten pages of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*. You had tears in my eyes – and what?

No closer to either writer in either moment.

Yet they do move you, they provoke the reality of another – *and what?*

Extensions from another's existence. Proof.

Another's mind, placed, hand-to-hand, in yours. Cut paper people and pages.

Words, surviving the obliterating edge of self.

Real worlds do not survive, do not extend. That's that, that's what.

My hand guiding yours, and yours mine, we write a letter to the residents. We tell them about Janet, her time here, what she wrote here (no response as yet, but we're still hopeful). Some edges should be encouraged beyond themselves. *Some?*

Your route continues. The houses — *The Villas* — don't compare to those *Spartan* conditions she described. Time passes. A pink house is last to impress, and then – the end. The sign at the corner says Stories Road, which is too funny to forget, and leaves you nowhere else to go.

<sup>5</sup> Janet's grandparents emigrated to New Zealand from Glasgow



# the shortest poem

\*1

By  
felix rolt

<sup>1</sup>I have had to add this note to my poem *Towards a Teleology of Epistemological Finitude*, which will appear in this revised form in my forthcoming anthology *Chocolate Antonyms* (Caber & Saber, 2021) as a number reviewers (including the esteemed likes of Malcolm Paunceface, N. M. Berthoffer, and Stephanie Gylde-*enworth*—*Oh!* the shame!) have mistaken my composition for a mere mark or mote on the page. I have further reason to believe that many readers mistook the page on which the poem appeared as an additional fly leaf as it appeared as an epigraph, that is, before the contents page, following the actual flyleaf in *Entomological Etymologies* (Fappenstance Press, 2019). I have also added this note as I believe had the poem been noticed there would have been some controversy as to what it is. Contrary to assumption, it is not an 8pt full stop. It is in fact the tail of the comma of a semicolon. (Had it been the tail of a simple lone comma, the verse would have lacked its sense of poignant tension between presence and loss.) Consequently, the poem stands as the shortest penned in the world to date. S.W. *Gillilan's Lines on Antiquity on Microbes* and Cassius Clay's untitled pugilistic poesy are popularly cited as the shortest. However, the current holder of this honour is A. Saroyan's excrescent typographic monstrosity, a work far from deserving of the accolade; while, I am, therefore, glad be his usurper, I let it be known the great disappointment I felt when I was not recognised for being such.

This is no failing of mine; rather, it bespeaks of the nonchalant ignorance of my casual readers and the uncouth crudity of my jaded critics. I anticipate now that my poem is known to the world some will try to deny me the title of writer of the shortest poem on the grounds that this footnote disqualifies it. My response would be to refer to p. *iii* in my aforementioned *Entomological Etymologies*. To my most dogged critics, who I anticipate will insist that p. *iii* is blank, I refer them to the above forthcoming work where the poem will be republished with this note and add the obvious point, that they should know well, that footnotes never count. I'd like to apologise for having to employ such vitriol, but I feel it is an artist's duty to use, as occasion demands, the base medium of prose to defend worthy Art.

# cell division

there's an old photo of my mother  
under a tent's orange awning. Her body

half-covered by legs hairless resting on a table, skin-coloured,  
smooth

the photo is golden. A photo  
blonde-filtered and hued  
a woman without any children / time passes

I used to trace five ridges  
on older legs / her legs my legs thin  
with girlish veins wishing / waiting  
wanting to push  
blood like hers through varicose veins

When I was little I wanted to be just like my mother.

The old photo  
with skin so slippery smooth

unused

until time passes  
and I found five ridges with little fingers reading  
her body like braille

a body language a body  
that made mine disconnected  
Have you learned about cell division?  
the process of a parent cell dividing  
into daughters  
a fake family fusing jargon and gender  
I use quotations over 'parent'  
and 'daughter' 'sister'  
the chromatids. When each daughter  
is genetically identical to its parent  
of DNA  
into relative  
like copycats / the same

cell  
(it's called mitosis) the replication

I wanted to be just like my mother the same. Replica 2:

Leider defekt. Defect is just another way to say other / divided

A child is a fraction of her mother / divided. How many

days must an infant be living / before she notices  
she is other  
from her own mother / not Mummy

but Mama  
the m of another. I am

the n that slid from the m / a baby a body / matured

on breastmilk and mind-set / the immigrant vocabulary  
my mother tongue is not  
my mother's tongue.

How many  
days postpartum / until a mother realises her baby is other

just a fraction of her form  
like little ridges

repeat

# three poems

## the death of the living room

The carpet is worn down  
from the muscle memory of looping back  
from the kitchen there is shouting  
it is female

after lunchtime wine  
disbelief more readily suspends itself  
in the familiar folds of leopard print on leopard print  
hospitality as a method of hospitality  
of the implied TV on TV

propped on sofa arm I have gladly forgotten  
what I have been asked to forget  
about bodies of water and their memory  
of the reverse side of the known universe  
of how things accumulate over time or don't

I too have sheltered from the rain in the company of men  
who look tall under railway arches  
with their hard 'u's and inscrutable business practices  
have misjudged the passage of time

more than once I have assembled a ritual of stools  
laughed at the proximity of the nearest blunt object  
have even considered going blonde

it's easy to leave a door ajar  
easier still to slam one in rage  
safer then to bed into the concave edges of familiar things  
and believe that the unseasonable  
weather might contain an ending

## blue light

In the backlit mirror of nighttime  
there's a performance  
we assemble along its perimeter  
speaking a language of ripe things

It's not news that  
red lipstick looks good always  
that eyelash curlers  
are terrifying to men

yet I devour  
synthesised intimacy  
an excess of description  
twelve thousand words for sort of pink

I admit I am consumer  
I come here to consume  
the textures of shared experience  
and a facemask made of real coffee

relearning gestures that were  
once intuitive  
making myself  
porous enough to sleep

## shopping

Having redrawn my outer edges  
in an idea of resistance  
I am wind-sock of a thing  
capacious and shakeable

I have tried to understand how the air  
around my body falls  
I have come to believe small objects can be talismans  
that there is a parsable language of things

So I wonder what will become of  
of my short torso and indelicate waist  
the hyperextension in my knees  
my aversion to sincerity

# RELEASE GRID

Release is a series of paintings, photographic grids and performances; abstractions that speak about the body and its functions. This is the photographic outcome of the project. The process of the work is a direct interaction with the emergent realities of daily life; the work itself becomes a visualisation that is inseparably bound up with the real without resembling it.

The series has been exhibited in different constellations at Copenhagen Art Week, at the exhibition Language Hospital at Sorø Kunstmuseum and at BKF, Denmark.



By  
katrine skovsgaard



ball



rock



deer tooth



deer vertebrae



plastic dinosaur



**YOU THINK YOU SEE  
ME, DO YOU?**



By  
ronan porter

# PICKLED

first exchange: the pickle has to be eaten in the end

*Leyla is a freelance illustrator with the hobby of underestimating herself. Her peculiar way of seeing and thinking about events and situations made me question myself multiple times during our long friendship. Once, she told me: « Love is selfish, because I want you and I want you to want me ». This short, incredible sentence proceeded to create in me an emotional vacuum, that translated into a better understanding of myself and of my own relationships, probably producing one of my most important “emotional pickles”: my sentimental insolence.*

*During this interview, Leyla is drunk, lying in my bed with her make-up still on, hugging one of my numerous soft toys (a big, soft pillow in the shape of a chew bone for dogs). When I ask her about fermentation and feelings, she asks me if I am sure I want to ask her this question, because she is not sure that she is going to produce a satisfactory answer. I reply that this is exactly the reason why I am asking her. She then starts describing a fictional pickle to me, an animated gherkin, with arms and legs. This is when we start.*

*« It's a pickled cucumber, with legs and arms, a face. Maybe working, but where... »*

*« But what is this? Is this a story? Is this... is this something that has happened to you? »*

*« To me? What do you mean? Like with a pickle...? »*

*« No, not with pickles, just a story, or a feeling, or something that you feel like you would like to preserve, and that you feel like it could mutate... because, you know, the fascinating thing about pickles is that they are something and then they change into something completely different. So a “pickled feeling” a “pickled sentiment”... I think it would be something that starts by being a determined thing and then just completely changes. »*

*« So a pickle can be a different thing, right? In the end. »*

*« I mean it's just... in the end what I would like you to tell me is just a story, or a feeling, or a moment, or something that you would like to put in a jar and preserve, and see what it turns out to be like. Or that you have kept for a long time, and that transformed into something else. »*

*« I don't know, because I was making picture books, so when I imagine a story about pickles I see only a cute gherkin. »*

*« It doesn't have to be about pickles, it has to be about you. »*

*« Me? »*

*« That's the point, it's not about pickles, it's more about... the pickle is your own story in the end. »*

*« In the end... okay, but then it has to be before. »*

*« It can be before, but it can also be after, after it has become a pickle. It could be something that you fermented inside of you... it doesn't have to be a secret or*

# SENTIMENTS

*anything, it can be all sorts of things. »*

*« Maybe... you know that pickles take time to become pickles, how is it called? You said that word before... »*

*« Fermentation. »*

*« Yes. Fermentation might be what happened to my life as I was growing up, from being a kid to becoming an adult. And after you become an adult, you still have so many things to learn, and still so many things to develop by yourself... so it can be after you become a pickle. And then... a pickle has to be eaten in the end, so... is it dying? I don't feel like it's dying, it's more like a goal. So, if my entire life up until I become an adult is a pickle, what can happen is that another pickle can eat me, so that I become part of a bigger pickle, which is family! A new family! And I can give birth to a little pickle! »*

*« You are just making up another story! It's not about you, it's only about pickles! »*

*« I know, I changed it. But it's also life. Yeah, it's a life, too! A family... no, I've just got this picture-book brain, so... »*

*« Think about... maybe, rather than starting from pickles, try and talk about something that you would like to keep. »*

*« Keep? »*

*« Yes. Because if you think about it, when you ferment something you just keep it inside. »*

*« Keep? Inside of my mind? »*

*« It can be your mind... »*

*« It's not in my mind but... in these few months I've just felt like I was being supported by lots and lots of people, friends, family and some random people. And that's what I want to keep, this sense of care and belonging. Sorry, I can't really say deep things. »*

*« That's not true, those are deep things. »*

*« I feel like what I told you is a very, very important matter for me. People can't live alone, like just “alone alone”, completely isolated. They definitely need somebody's support. And even if you don't know it, you are already getting lots of people's help. For example, if you live alone you might think: “I can live only by using my own forces, without the need for anyone else”, but then you turn the lights on and you take a bath, and you are still using electricity, water... Also, if you go, say, to the supermarket, even if you try and avoid any human interaction there's always people behind the things you buy... I have already told you, but when I moved here I was very nervous, and I suddenly felt like it was really important to stay close to my friends and family, but also to build this sense of community. And now, when I go to the supermarket, or restaurant or anywhere else, I just say “hi” to the staff or to random people there, and it makes me very happy. Maybe, happy. And I feel that we are connected. Is this what you want to hear? »*

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By  
elena lo presti

# FASHION PRACTICES: ON CARE, ON WASTE, ON TECHNOLOGY

## care

*'Calls for care are everywhere, from the marketing of green products by which companies compete to show how much they care, to the purchase of recycled items by which consumers show that we care. More profound and preoccupying beyond this moral marketing glass is how neoliberal governance has made of caring for the self a pervasive order of individualised bio-political morality. People are summoned to care for everything but, foremost, for "our" selves, our lifestyles, our bodies, our physical and mental fitness, or that of "our" families, reducing care to its most parochial caricature'*

(Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017)

We inhabit fluctuating states of care and hopelessness. Calls for sustainability are everywhere, yet inhabiting the structures of Capitalism, the boundaries between intrinsic frameworks of care, and the performative ethics of brands and corporations are increasingly blurred. How possible is it to design systems of care when futures are entangled with hegemonic regimes? The concept of 'slow-fashion' is often posed as an alternative to the vastly polluting current fast-fashion industry, but is it possible

to slow down or dismantle capitalist systems when so many lives depend on and inter-mingle with these systems? How can the Fashion Industry be slowed down without vast job loss across the production line?

In attempting to become more sustainable, brands often sign up to sustainability pacts with set targets. However there are several issues with Sustainability pacts, as these frameworks are typically voluntary, and not legally binding, so essentially exist as guidelines. There are an increasing number of brands signing these commitments, yet action is barely visible. Whilst laying out necessary guidelines, if brands sign up to non-legally binding initiatives, can this be read as a form of performative ethics and performative sustainability: a public image facade of sustainability, with the eventual goal being positive public image and increased sales and revenue.

Thinking about 'care' within your personal practice, leads to the question — is your own making practice exploitative? Who and what, humans and non-humans, are exploited in the production of your garments at every stage of the making system? How do we transition away from the industry motive of 'designing itself out' of climate change and environmental degradation, and instead 'design into' practises of care?

## waste

*"The falsity of an inside-outside model is becoming more obvious as we enter an age of increasing knowledge concerning the seemingly obvious fact that we live on a planet. Where on earth is 'away' when we have a sense of planetary awareness? One's garbage doesn't go 'away' - it just goes somewhere else; Capitalism has tended to create an 'away', that is no longer thinkable"*

(Timothy Morton, 2017).

Waste is ingrained into much contemporary pattern cutting, producing offcuts from the very first stage of the making process. The first known pattern cutting books originate from 16th Century Spain, where wasted sections of cloth are documented in every pattern. Similarly excess fabric is linked to historical fashion trends such as French Aristocracy as a sign of wealth. On the other hand many traditional forms of dress in Asia such as Kimonos, Saris, other early pattern cutting systems that used straight lines are inherently zero-waste.

In the UK it is estimated that in 2019, the oversupply of used textiles and clothing pushed several textile recyclers into bankruptcy. The Waste and Resources Action Programme estimates that 650,000 tonnes of unwanted garments are annually collected in the UK alone. In 2019, a 'Fixing Fashion' report carried out by The Environmental Audit Committee proposed a 1p tax per garment to producers to fund research into improved garment collection and sorting, and another proposal to ban the incineration or landfilling of unsold stock that had potential to be recycled or reused. Both

these propositions were declined by the UK Government.

Half of globally discarded textiles are sent abroad, it has been noted that in many cases this leads to dumping and uncontrolled incineration. Not only is the import of second hand clothing polluting, it also suffocates domestic textile and fashion industries. Fabrics such as Polytetrafluorethylene, and other fabrics using fluorine-based membrane textiles, commonly used in outdoor-wear, when burnt release hydrofluoric acid and hydrochloric acid, chemicals which are immediately life threatening.

Current technology for fabric recycling is extremely limited, as only fabrics which are mono-fibres can be remade into yarns, and often there is a reduction in quality. In many cases, discarded textiles are shredded and made into low quality blankets and wall insulation.

One method of tackling waste is through up-cycling. A simple and viable option for fashion and textiles students and small brands, but for large scale production, up-cycling fabrics into new garments is difficult due to the differences in each discarded fabric, differing sizes, and varying qualities in material. When garments are discarded, the physical fabric has already been cut and shaped, resulting in material that is difficult to up-cycle for traditional pattern cutting, which require larger pieces of fabric. Up-cycling can also sometimes be viewed as a contaminated interaction: direct contact with a previous wearer, creating hygienic issues which can be culturally and behaviourally viewed negatively. How do we reframe a common perception of second hand clothes being 'dirty', to something with design value? Therefore, is it ever possible to achieve transparency

using second hand fabrics? Demands for increased transparency is an issue across the supply chain, in relation to human rights and sustainability, so if you are using second hand fabrics in your work, is it even possible to trace the fabrics' life cycle?

#### technology

*“Many of these developments have opened up new frontiers of hope, even in economically depressed regions of the world. Indeed, technology and optimism fit hand in glove because both play upon open and unwritten futures, promising release from present ills. Technological civilisation, however, is not just a bed of roses”*

( Sheila Jasanoff, 2016)

Technology functions as a tool of capitalism: which leads to the question of where power originates from and who is it for? In many cases throughout history, technology has so largely oriented around profit-making, or to serve the military-industrial complex, this is exemplary too within the fashion industry. An example of this is the creation of ‘SewBot Automation’ by the company SoftWear. A 2002 US regulation named ‘Berry Amendment’ restricted the US army from procuring uniforms made outside of the US, so when it was found that there was a lack of skilled labour in garment manufacturing in the US, automated systems were developed to fulfil their requirements. SoftWear’s website states: “The company received US\$1.75 million grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to produce a prototype of its automatic sewing machine in 2012, ultimately raising US\$ 4.5 million to further advance the technology”. This

technology is now being used by Adidas in China.

The industry still runs via similar production lines that were dominant at the peak of European colonisation. In the past few decades, Western outsourcing of ‘cheaper labour’ in factories in Asia (and now Turkey) has created a system where exploitation happens on every level, from farming, to textile manufacturers, to machinists. Which is why we should never forget the Rana Plaza catastrophe. Exploiting cheap labour abroad can be seen as creating an ‘away’ — not in the West’s everyday vision, making it easy to ignore and forget about the vast mistreatments. It is also important to note the final resting places of much of technology: e-waste dumps in countries such as Ghana, Pakistan and China. Some propose automation of a way to ‘free’ people of these conditions, yet in the case of fully automated production lines the ‘cost’ of human labour is eradicated, and potentially the jobs and livelihoods of factory workers. When is it, or is it ever appropriate to replace humans with automation?

How is it then possible to use new technologies to maximise agency and minimise harm, when many of these technologies exist in situations that produce wealth for a small number of people and corporations? Desire for money and control in factory automation often means removing the ‘human,’ whilst creating more surplus goods and wealth for the company. It is important to remain critical of this system. Since the industry’s supply chain is complex and global, the widespread introduction of sewbots causes job disruption through technical and education bias, as well as environmental disruption through the vast resources required to make the machinery.

There are, however, several companies investigating AI and automation within

fabric recycling systems. This could potentially vastly upscale and speed up fabric recycling efforts, which would be beneficial to the fashion system. This brings us to the question of whether this is counterbalanced by the benefits of automation’s recycling capacities? Or does it feed into the same loop of energy wastage, and then create a mindset that consumption can carry on as usual, because there are viable solutions for waste management. It is important to consider how ‘green’ technologies, which sit within typical consumption patterns simply allow for the normal functioning of capitalist markets, and the illusion of infinite growth. This paradox sits within so much of sustainable design methodology. Do sustainable garments become desirable in a way that makes people buy more? Is it ever possible to design slower consumption habits into the actual design of the garment? To what extent does human reliance on technology distance and distort the care of the actual natural environment, as opposed to the care of the economy?

By  
annie mackinnon

For the next issue we are exploring  
**'THE FAKE'** and **'THE REAL'**.  
Send notes, pitches, questions, ideas,  
writings, or visual submissions to  
[thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com).

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