

# THIS DOOR OPENS





#### editor's letter

We introduce *the pluralist: Openings and Closings*, the first issue of the 2019/20 academic year. As beginnings, or the illusion of beginnings, intersect with the calendar year drawing to a close, we wanted to pause think about the strange spaces of possibility which they open up.

As new editors, we also wanted to think about what Pluralism could mean in terms of publications. Drawing on the statement "Pluralism is the view that there is no one correct logic, or alternatively, that there is more than one correct logic", our issue themes will continue to be a pairing of ideas or concepts which have some tension or opposition within them.

This issue of *the pluralist* hosts a range of writing and visual contributions from an essay on the bodily effects of learning a new language, to poetry about the hallucinatory sensations of dreaming doors, to collages about yearning for home – the contributions in this issue consider the ways we often render on our own narratives as a series of openings and closings.

There's much here we're really excited about, not least a series of features we hope to develop over the next five issues, including a focus on sustainable art practices within the Royal College of Art. Eilis Searson will continue as design editor, exploring the themes of each issue with her approach to the design and format of the publication. Second year MA Writing students Harriet Welch and Lucy Holt are new content editors.

The next issue of *the pluralist* will have the theme of Self/Other – we're especially excited to see more visual contributions, as well as submissions from bilingual texts and experimental writing across languages. Any questions – drop us an email at [thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com).

We look forward to hearing from you,

**Harri, Lucy, + eilis**





**Dust to Dust:  
A RESPONSE TO JACOPO RINALDI'S FILM  
'MILANO ANNO ZERO' (2017)**

And yet the books will be there on the shelves, separate beings,  
That appeared once [...]  
(Miłosz)

Czesław Miłosz's poem 'And yet the books' (1986) begins mid-action, as though following a turn in conversation — it begins by pointing towards the future presence of "the books." This first line reaches outward, and these "separate beings" hover between commas, breaths, surrounded by the space of the page. This suggests that though their future presence is asserted with confidence, there is a sense of vulnerability: carefully held by the punctuation, the words are pushed from the text into blank space. Likened to chestnuts, the books strangely begin to live *after* their fall; their life begins once "touched, coddled," picked off the ground. There is a breathiness to this line, as though imitating the life breathed into the books, like the kindling of a fire. The implication, as autumn chestnuts, is that the books are the product of a transition, a movement from "radiance" to "earth," a shift through the 'cooling of memory'. Derived from light, the ink left behind is its shadow. The letters are frames containing the potential for regeneration, via the halting breath, the "frail warmth" of the reader. This call for breath haunts the poem's words: they have a rustle to their rhythm, almost seeming to move, living, under the reader's gaze.

It is this haunting rustle that echoes through Jacopo Rinaldi's film 'Milano Anno Zero' (2017), through flowing dust, blurring books, and shifting light. It is uncertain whether the books emerge from this dust, or that it is by the dust they are consumed. Steady behind the movement, the books come mysteriously into being and mysteriously vanish. The light casts shadows on the dust — it quietly fights itself. It looks like cloth, moving in waves. As two-dimensional painting captures the depth of folds in cloth, so the light makes mountains and valleys of the dust. Like a curtain, the dust has the ability to reveal or cover a spectacle (perhaps as Miłosz's "pageant"). Light streams in on this secret space, entering a window. And the viewer, watching the film, stands as though at another window; a two-dimensional surface giving the illusion of a secret space projected into their own. Stepping forward into the moving dust and light, the books blur in and out of focus, like a slowing heartbeat. The smoke consumes the viewer's sight and they are lost in the soft rustling fog.

The dust consumes all, spectator and book alike; they are fused and confused. From behind the curtain of dust, the eerie presence of the books on the shelves seems to call the travelling viewer into this mist as though sirens. According to Italo Calvino, the reading of a classic text is a voyage of discovery through the folds of collective memory. Beckoned into the mist, the spectator voyages through the folds of subconscious inherited memory as they read, lured by the possibility of bringing its shadowy forms into focus. It is a two-way exchange: the reader rekindles the text, and the text rekindles the reader's cooling memory; the reader gives the text its future, and the text gives the reader a past. In the present tense of the film, there is a striking juxtaposition between the steady stillness of the books and the movement of the dust. As "living beings," the books come from dust and to dust they will return; and it is this dust representing their own past and future that moves in front of their solidity. This enables a simultaneity where, for an instant, there is a fusion of time, a singular moment of suspension, where the essence of the work might be glimpsed before it vanishes. Looking away from the illusive surface, the space outside the film's frame appears suddenly still, haunted by rustling phantoms promising emergence from the dust.

\*Czesław Miłosz, 'And yet the books' (1986), *New and Collected Poems 1931-2001*, Penguin, 2005, p. 468. All quotes taken from here.



Waiting for beginning. It sits. It sees a lady with a lamp walk out from the previous performance – there must be a giveaway, it thinks. It slept all night, but all night was not enough sleep. Burning lids tossed back on the bike to gather cooler. It sees a lot of well-dressed individuals. It takes a long scan of the room. It sees rhythm in repetition, with little difference, everywhere. It is trying to imagine, trying to set its mind in motion. It sees a sprawler-over on a long mauve chair and sees couples in love with each other (and themselves). It sees another on-its-own-er. It averts. It knows. Its favourite friend texts half a joke in German. It asks the friend about judgement and trust.

Whilst waiting to see Reich/Richter at the Barbican, a lot of questions surfaced that wanted answering. The work, billed as a collaboration between minimalist composer Steve Reich, and painter, Gerhard Richter, where mirrored fractions of the latter's paintings, set algorithmically in motion by filmmaker Corinna Belz, are composed to by Reich. A circle of influence shapes the outcome, from Richter approaching Reich to make music for his paintings, and back again, Richter being influenced by Reich; this circle being echoed in the work. Familiar with and interested in both, there was yet a cynical anticipation. The cultural cloak around Reich & Richter – composed of words like *titan, giant and greatest living* [...] – feels pretty bad. But then, a friend reminded me, it's the art and media world's vernacular and (hopefully) not the artists.

It spent the previous evening in half and half: continuing a series of painting compositions – adding, retracting and disturbing what was already there – and, squinting at tiny-print sheet music, trying to plumb something constant from what disturbed the music's hidden, steady rhythm. It spent the evening trying to perform the forms its hands were bound by, but (so far) were refusing.

It got distracted, as per, in thinking about process and making; about form's surprising ability to be generous, to be generative. Pre-determined structures can produce a kind of freedom; yet not all forms permit the truancy that results in something new. Friends/foes.<sup>1</sup>

In the auditorium – before the opening before the closing: visual rhythm already in the room, in sound too. Patterns of feet down stairs filling seats. Noise (in every sense) accumulates. It twitches at every approach, everyone it hears makes positive exclams about their seats. It notes: many good seats. It imagines what would happen if the concert never starts.

In Steve Reich's 1968 essay *Music as a Gradual Process*, he talks about the difference between process that precedes and is invisible in the outcome, and process that is active, detectable and, I suppose, in a constant state of affect – is the outcome. When process is form.

Looking at a painting, really looking, like: standing in a gallery following and unfolding strokes and layers that make up the surface – the thoughts of the painter start to materialise. The decision-making, the additions and retractions, and incidental moments voice both active (in-action) process, and structural (set up) process. Listening to music (or reading) can become so immersive that overall experience takes the place of this kind of unpicking. The edges of the work become invisible (the edges of the self, and all!) It is perhaps an over familiarity with the behind-the-scenes of a medium that get in the way of this edgelessness – perhaps.

Is this the same for music (or writing) whose subject is form, is process? Perhaps not. And so what if a painting that takes process as precedent is then submitted to a secondary, even tertiary process, and then: music is composed for it – is this still similar to the active process that SR talks about? Maybe so! Not in the individual works themselves, but the active conversation between them – but then, what does that do to immersion?

*While performing and listening to gradual musical processes one can participate in a particular liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focusing in on the musical process makes possible that shift of attention away from he and she and you and me outwards towards it.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It thought about the two times it has heard Anne Boyer speak on the subject – on despotic forms, and how attempts to break them only reified their strictures and their power. Anne used the example of Facebook, how any in-house attempt to criticise the platform served to make stronger the house it critiques. The same is found in many systems of power; to critique from within makes the power all the surer. (Protest against capitalism becoming a literally sellable product etc.) Attending an evening of culture of the titans when the titans are the kings of their own, ruling demographic... well you get the point.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Reich, "Music as a Gradual Process," in *Writings on Music 1965-2000* ed. Paul Hillier (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 34-36



Performance notes

Strange, how violent bright the paint becomes when miniscule. Striated and incredibly smooth. It hadn't expected that. Pushes all language, all preconceptions, all articulate thought right out. Mesmerising, really.

How to locate the thinking of the three-personed process? How to treat this as a whole work?  
How sensitive is one process to the other?

The verging, merging digital layers move above and below at different speeds and squeegee-like across the screen (groan). It is reminded of a Magic Eye picture, and it's not sure that's good.

Trying to approach the whole, intricacies drop out. It can't hear for looking. To really listen, its seeing requires going inwards. But the screen draws seeing out. It chooses to ignore sight for a while – to listen only.

The music acts as an anchor to the whereabouts. It knows the painted place. It reads a lot of possible thought into each composer's work. Defences etc.

Control is diminished. It remembers that what it senses is not complete (or is complete in its incompleteness). It asks itself about control.

It begins to see actual paint. It wants to cut pieces out, to examine them. It thinks, cynically (given the titanic status) that postcards might be produced from stills. The largest fractions appear like patterned folk art, become recognisable, friendly even. Slow simulacra that make it want to paint.

On cue, a speedy return to the start. Retractions. Exhilarating. An open loop, it is sucked in, then spat back out again. (Strange, how violent bright the paint becomes when miniscule.)

In the process of writing up its notes, it is listening to a (sneaky) recording of the music on the night. In re-listening, re-reading and re-thinking – like little popping lights – it sees what it had been staring at. A hooking process that it has experienced before: auditory memory snagged on the surface of a painting, sound-bite playback heard first in the moment of making. Memory gets tied to all sorts of things and slaps you in the (inner) eye without your say-so.

It keeps wanting to hold both sight and sound at once, to access something singular and locate a core of attention in order to pull away into this *it*. Yet the accumulated sense of something whole is never satisfied. The triple edge of process at work complexifies the outpour of excitement/mystery/magic that Reich writes about, but is it discernable in such a gush? Or is this more a spectacle? An admittedly mesmerising, centripetal experience that reaches for the senses, but goes no further.

Here it is not Richter the painter we are seeing, not Reich the composer we are hearing. Along with Corinna Belz, a third thing, an experiment is made.

A version of the live process Reich wrote about is present, I think: his own reactive process of making as guided by a static shell, a prescribed yet generative form that clasps at the edges of an illusive whole.



violating linearity

the pluralist

	the potential to become one wholesome moment	
	in the end	with no need to begin but
	when she would be	morphing linearity into a happy mass
	hoping to not remember the beginning	and constant slight delight
	scared, or angry, or happy	and silent love
	trying not to be utterly exhausted,	that might attack her secure joy
while ignoring the opening of another space		preventing standards
she might have entered		making their extraordinarity irrelevant
and might have realised		keeping moments on a leash of regularity
as it shut her in		respecting each others unexcited being
forced her to experience abnormality		following each other kindly
	with a mere increase of emotion	in humble equalities of periods of her life
	it created an interior	time that wanted nothing but linearity
	to her void	moments were a loud violation of time
	abandoning the consistency	in the vacuum she fled to from the beginning
	and it felt cruel to her	being melted into the routine of the unspectacular





Near the beginning of *The Little Girls*, one of Bowen's later novels, Dinah, disappointed at the absence of one of her guests, insists: "I have to picture everything in advance. It's by picturing things that one lives, I completely think." She had made arrangements for three diners, and a plate of chops, untouched, corrodes the scene she had in mind. She goes on: "Which [...] is, I expect, probably, just as well. Because when, usually, owing to someone else, something one's pictured does not after all work out, one has at least had *one* tremendous pleasure." Despite the seemingly blithe delivery of this statement – and depending on how you hear that leaned-on one, how it thieves the weight from 'tremendous' – there is something deflated, desperate about it – the failure to realize what one has planned in advance. It is a peculiar punishment to be unable to enact in reality what you have in private toiled over, prepared, perfected. Though she doubtlessly prepared and knew well in advance the essays she read on BBC Radio, Bowen can be heard to stammer in broadcasts from the early 70s. For Bowen the pleasure of eloquence and clean delivery was restricted to the act of writing. It's hard not to see a relationship between one's difficulty with speech and one's writing. (A personal anecdote: once, the word 'deliberate' wrestling with my tongue, I mangled a fine sentence by saying, instead, 'on purpose,' spoiling any sophisticated expression and marking black lines down my mind).

In her novels and short stories, Bowen takes delight in just as often as she takes revenge on language. Verbs are summoned, then stationed as nouns; casual descriptions grow tense and tighten, clause after clause; moments occur and are seized upon till they decay or hatch forth molten revelations. And then there are the plot-devices themselves: telegrams, mail, wills, notes, *communiqués*, and letters – letters are Bowen's leitmotif, frequently devastating and total in their effect. ('Don't open that!' I always think whenever I re-read 'The Demon Lover'). She takes an axe to syntax and knuckles strange sense from the wreckage.

Bowen's sentences don't so much begin as hurry, blurt, lay a harried claim upon the page; such as this, from her wartime novel *The Heat of The Day*: "Obliteration of everything by winter was to be dreaded." That 'obliteration' detonates any poor verb forced to follow it, and I don't doubt Bowen plucked up the root-form of 'dread' just to get that scampering cluster of consonants to tumble, trip, as if in flight. This, during a father's stroll through the garden in *The Little Girls*: "Happy this garden would be to have such a revenant, were he ever dead." Can a sentence make a wish? The startling first-part of this sentence draws its power from its odd awakened quality, as if the garden has stirred to life to insert this dream into the scene. I can practically hear her, fag in mouth, cackling into the typewriter at her own gall to begin a sentence with 'happy' and lead it, quickly, with glee, to 'dead'.

Here she is in *The Heat of The Day*, fixing her gaze on a sad, spiteful mother: "She wore a grey woven two-piece, pre-war in quality as in style, softened off at the throat by a fold of net." The first-part is a caress, roving, admiring, even envious; middle-part stiff, exacting; and in the third-part, by empowering the adjective 'soft' (rather than, say, 'folded net') and prolonging that sound with 'off', we get a faint – almost *fond* – ripping sound, just as we reach the throat. Read that sentence again and watch how seamlessly Bowen drops a headless figure into our laps.

What's in a look? To Bowen, everything. Her characters *see through*, perceive completely; nowhere in Bowen's writing will you find a character merely glancing – when they look, they look to behold. One of her most well-known short stories, 'The Demon Lover', is about a woman who returns to her empty London home to find a letter (duh) waiting for her, disclosing in so many words the fate that awaits her. The story closes around an instance of reckoning, of terror so concentrated it atomizes: "Through the aperture driver and passenger, not six inches between them, remained for an eternity eye to eye." It is when her characters are rendered speechless that the writing turns immortal. In 'The Happy Autumn Fields,' Sarah shies from her suitor as he walks his horse beside her; the thought of being separated from her sister by him frees this image from her mind: "Enfolded, dizzied, blinded as though inside a wave, she could feel his features carved in brightness above her. [...] The consummation would be when their eyes met." Who else would load a look with such irradiated power if not one who does not trust her tongue? *The Little Girls*, too, revolves around moments evaded, moments seized, then dropped. There seems to be so much at stake, all the time. Friends who have parted decades ago still stop, suddenly, rushed upon by memories; everywhere with Bowen, aching, *inaudibly*, Time groans.



## MY JOURNEY TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE ART PRACTICE:

How can I have a practice that considers the climate crisis if my work is not sustainable?

My performance and participatory-based practice considers our future with in the state of climate crisis. Therefore the question of the sustainability of my practice is one I have grappled with for a while. It has led to decisions that have both broadened and restricted my options. The way forward I have chosen is just one possible answer to this question. My answer is specific to my practice - I am still working with it and searching for better methods and justification.

My art practice now uses fewer resources and each of my materials is far more considered. My main decision has been to reject lens-based and digital methods of producing or documenting work. I am concerned by the extensive mining and production methods used to create cameras, laptops and other digital technologies. Hence my approach to documentation has dramatically changed. I believe in the power of the audience to form documentation; their memories, experiences and resulting conversations have a legacy that allow the work to live on in a similar way to how a film or series of photographs might. This rejection means that documentation needs to be integrated in each stage of my process, building it into the performance structure and related activities.

In addition to this I use writing; I collect responses from my audience, write detailed personal reflections and record the specific events that take place through changes to my script. Throughout a series of performances I update the script,

Crossing-out and re-writing sections after each performance. No two performances are the same as the differences between each become another part of the documentation of those that have happened before. Sometimes the differences are only slight, other times I might change a whole section but both accumulate to build a record of the performances and a collection of individual moments.

Another way sustainability has impacted my practice is shown through my writing methods. All my script writing, research and reflection is hand-written, often in pencil and on recycled paper. For me, the challenge came when developing my script-writing methods, I needed a way to easily edit my script without it being on my laptop. Instead I started using a system where each sentence was written on a separate piece of paper, taped to the wall so that I could view the whole script at once but also easily move, remove and edit it at ease. I have now used this system to write two performances, for both it has worked well, I like how it turns the act of writing into an action that is far more physical and performative.

The methods I use originally came out of a restriction but now it forms part of the identity of my practice, adding layers of consideration to each of my actions. I have found a way to tackle sustainability that works for me, but I don't believe a rejection of the digital is necessarily for everyone. I am always aware that my approach will continue to change as what I find is appropriate now will not always be the most appropriate or sustainable way.

Georgina Watson  
MA Contemporary Art Practice: Public Sphere



we could







cattreup habbin



We start in Mona Hatoum's *Corps étranger* (1994). Here we stand. Here in this cylinder – or in the mouth, even. Or in the throat. Or to be more specific, we are in a panopticon – its tall, engulfing stature built to track each part of a glistening, corporeal labyrinth – the walls wind up around a circular screen below. The screen takes a vertical view; images made with an endoscopic camera take us down through the otherwise hidden interior of the body, simulating the fall into an abyss of examination. But magnified. So where are we now? Perhaps reaching the stomach. Or rather, we are in an endless flow of pure, bodily matter – an enlarged, messy and irreversible journey – framed in a white cylinder.

We begin on the outer skin of the body. Slowly we slide into its first opening. Trace our verticality; the camera strokes curves of tunnel-like, narrow corridors – it twists in any way it can – the walls pulsate with sounds we hear of a heartbeat and breathing. Persistent pumps, in tune with inhalations, exhalations – these are actions not seen. These are sounds of a ticking phantasm, of someone elsewhere, as the camera moves us further, deeper, until reaching the surface through another opening; there's a small moment of suspense. We're pulled back inside. We resume falling in something less defined, uncertain, something strange.

The camera doesn't adjust the torch brightness, the light hits walls, there's a sharp sheen on parts of the oesophagus or connective ducts, of the stomach or the entrance to the small intestine. Flashes of mustard, crimson and puce on a screen of endless flows. How obscure does the tissue appear for us now?

Screens are panels to intercept light, heat, other radiation. They reflect the unseen. Like the glow on a chemically coated screen that was Wilhelm Röntgen's first X-ray of the human body<sup>1</sup> – inverting the visible and invisible – distinctions of materiality and solidity merged on a fluorescent panel for the first time. Hatoum's screen is so ambient, so luminiferous, that everything appears as turbid media in a never-ending, encircled slide. Here, in the omnipotence of the visual, is the intrigue of discovering a strange dimension, and the fear of seeing something unpleasant on the screen. But close our eyes: it disappears. Just that beating heart, those monotonous breaths, to hint at a life more whole, with some movement, maybe, in our heads, while innards stay in darkness. But illuminated, with eyes open, they are material, tactile. To browse through, to probe, the natural body bared to the interventions of science. What *Corps étranger* is drawing out is a withdrawal from the self.

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A digital device – a tablet, a smartphone, or a smaller one – is held, worn or swallowed, incorporated into the body, which is recorded, rendered into data using digital health technologies, or collected by body sensor devices. To monitor its functions or movements, signs and signals, or to perform medical tasks with apps. We upload, or actively insert information. Classify – temperature, breathing rate, BMI, activity level, lung function, heart function, blood glucose level, blood flow, blood chemistry, mood, pain – as acts of self-enhancement and self-care. We are sinking into biotechnological systems, platforms as personalised, wearable, implantable, which all promote fewer healthcare costs, wider healthcare access, better self-knowledge, self-reflection, hyper-awareness, in exchange for visibility.

The endoscope embodies the biotechnological 'eye' of the inside. We saw the first to process images come on the market in the mid 1970s, morphing into the fiberscope – expanding the boundaries of examination – to the videoscope, to the ultrasonic endoscope, to the first endoscopic system built on HDTV technology. By the early 2000s an exponential increase in information was visible on the screen – fine blood cells, legions, colour variations in tissue – from monitors attached to long wires that snaked beyond the skin. But these wires will disappear. We now witness capsule endoscopy – pills the size of vitamin tablets with batteries, light sources, cameras, small transmitters sealed inside – designed to travel the whole digestive tract. And these capsules can be found in medical centres (and on eBay, pre-owned), adorned with logos of the following: PillCam™, Olympus®, OMOM®, and Silicon Valley's CapsoCam Plus® – the first to offer 360 degree views. And when swallowed, they send back signals to distant transformers and monitors etched with different logos.

In the case of CapsoCam Plus®, there's the promise of panoramic lateral viewing within; with four cameras; taking twenty images per second; for its fifteen hours of battery life – that's 108,000 images in total – imaging each floret of the intestinal walls, exhaustively, explicitly geared to scan for possible pathologies. Because, really, these are capsules designed to seek out contagion, to recognise, process and respond to as malfunctions made known by the machine. The biotech eye is always open. To process our bodily production as a system of codes. As data interpreted for diagnosis. From Greek *διάγνωσις* (diagnōsis), *διά-* meaning 'through' or 'thoroughly', in the sense of taking things apart – taking slices from one system, and placing them into another – here, information is picked from the interior into diagnostic space.

<sup>1</sup> On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1895, the German physicist exposed the hand of his wife Anna Bertha Röntgen to the rays for fifteen minutes, creating the first X-ray of the human body.

The prefix pokes at a method that is encompassing, exposing, that cuts through whole passages to reclassify a body in pieces. So as the camera glides through, detached, ubiquitous, surveillant, material fragments – from corporeal to code – are rendered on the screen. Visual forms appear displaced, or estranged, in the subtext of ‘foreign’ space. But for whose benefit? We recognise the symbiotic relationship between technology and power. We process computerised medical imaging devices offered by private corporations, their products stamped with <sup>TM</sup> and ® to congeal bodies and technologies into property. As with healthcare apps – they also see – they’re more domestic, playing a subtle part in our lives, championed in the interests of self-knowledge, preventative medicine, etc. And we respond with little resistance, to give up our information with ease. We conduct internal surveillance as incentivised patients.

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Mona Hatoum calls this work, her work, with its deft melding of her interior and this digital screen, a way to take surveillance to the absurd<sup>2</sup>. Exhibited first at the Pompidou in 1994, it saw the idea of a penetrative kind of observation, maybe kick-started by the introduction of mass surveillance in spaces like London; or by integrating CCTV cameras; or by gaining access to the internet – but here we stand now. After everything, here we stand inside of it. How does it feel? Immediately enclosing us: pulsating and rosy. A machine-readable body. Some would call it a way to comprehend bodily boundaries, only collecting data to detect pathologies – to combat hostile errors, or internal threats – to protect us. And a mechanism so modestly operated, as to produce these images for us, could only have the interests of us at its core. Still, this space remains untrusting. For the premise of *Corps étranger* is to navigate forms of control, with its diagnostic footage hacked and turned into a tool for critique.

To diagnose breaks a body open, it falls into a shifting cusp, in flux, caught in transition – a moment that feels familiar but at the same time unknowable to us. The mystery inside is being abstracted, taken away from darkness by patented technologies. As with terrain, its image is mapped, measured, analysed, circulated, sold, instrumentalised in the process of surveillance. It’s relentless. What it doesn’t recognise, it attempts to get at. So we arrive at the latter part of diagnosis: ‘to learn to know’ in a space propped up by industry and capital, where penetrability equals profit – where, under the microscope, objects are exported, sampled. Or, rather, where subjects are flattened. Or, to be more specific, sliced through.

‘The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity’, writes Donna Haraway – our disembodiment, in infinite streams of these technologies – ‘to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power’.<sup>3</sup> And at the heart of power, under the guise of neutrality, is its unmarked gaze, irrefutable, unregulated, in the process of diagnosing; fixing. But still. On second thoughts, let’s not close our eyes. Let us, for a moment, revel in this vision – glowing insides, its bursts of murky tones. Zoom in, zoom out, zoom in again, as *Corps étranger* does, and appreciate this image in pools of what Haraway calls ‘situated knowledges’, or ‘views from somewhere’.<sup>4</sup> That is, to process this space as a community, and come out the other side anew – that’s active, variable, multiple, mobile; that resists image as resource; that remains an ongoing process. As *Corps étranger* does. So we end where we started. Prying, frightened. But with our eyes, beyond the framework of institutional science, these parts might offer a path towards more satisfying forms of transformation.

[WIP]

<sup>2</sup> Emma Robertson, ‘Mona Hatoum: “It’s About Shattering the Familiar”’, *The Talks* < <https://the-talks.com/interview/mona-hatoum/> > [accessed 20 October 2019]

<sup>3</sup> Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.196.



### A Beginning

LOVE began as just one speck of dust infinitely smaller than all specks of dust, a tiny but tangible singular THING – ONE miniscule and a billion-times-magnified burning hot OBJECT which out of an ultimate-unknown-loneliness felt an urge to expand and create a few particle-pairs that would pull full-force together and dance and twirl on a kaleidoscope floor of empty, click-clack SPARKS of clenched fist LOVE that would whip and kick and collide to then BURST with an ab-so-lute beauty of everything:

From hydrogen to helium to plasma to swallowing dark to weeping light to miraculous cosmic microwaves to matter to suns to supernovas to carbon to nitrogen to oxygen to iron – to clusters to galaxies to our Milky Way gold – to Sol to Mars to Venus and all the others in our Heavenly glass-eyed eight – to showery-steam to sleepless-salt-sea to cells to squish-less sponge to bottom-feeder worm to hungry fish to sprouting limbs to crawling belly-first on fresh dirt under big-blank sky – to silken scales to greasy fur to ancient four legs to 21st-Century-two, ready to run hand-in-hand across the strings of infinity in their first symphonic flood.

So as the first few pairs twirled and stepped in an interstellar waltz beneath soon-to-be suns and woozy-blue moonlight in the making, maybe they smiled but most likely they frowned, for one day their energy of LOVE would whisk its way down to wily old me and cast its shadowy gloom – so I waited in the wings of tick-tock time for it to happen, to one day poke head from changing VOID and shout across this one-axis Earth: I AM HERE.

AND somewhere across this void you waited too, the other half of this heartbreak to be, with your hair unkempt, twisting to a reddish-blaze as if saffron robes in rain, skin pale like shadow of Maria, eyes content but tainted by deeper sorrow, mind like many others – seen but never met, heard but never listened, thought but never felt nor touched – only wondered, questioned, silently wished and always feared – and with a smile to send just one ship – mine – into the eye of your perfect storm. I at the eye, bobbing gently in wait.

In whole you're radiant (forever) – radiant like reflection from chlorine-choked pool sitting perfectly still, no dead bugs or brown leaves, just water and simple stone.

### An End

We stood on lonely spot where it all looked toy town miniature angles and rectangles and squares and tiny insect eye bulbs and brilliant strings of glowing blues and reds like constellations of virgin earth, even then it was overwhelming in enormity, like a thousand toothed beast swallowing me in its hungry loving embrace, mouth wet and warm with concrete cold, where from each fang dripped the plaque of existence played out on eight billion skid-row stages, clutching their five minutes of fame before six feet below –

Then we embraced beneath the bright lights big city, still lit cigarettes in gutter and honk of hopeless horn, plane lost above and people lost below, us together at the plughole centre of this special nowhere, just there... We embraced for a few too long then said goodbye going gone, off in Polar opposite directions – me footing South, you far North – opposite to the ends of this Earth and even sulking universe beyond, sulking for its starry plans had failed –

For away I went to another time, you to another space, different cosmic dimensions where we'd be newly destined to never meet again, never hug in street under garish signs or skipping glass or wheeling bike or strangled weed – and all the better for it – best to just light our fires of failed love with only memory - never taste nor smell, nor hear, talk or touch – only SEE our imagined past that would soon dust off forever, another blank piece of our dark matter puzzle –

And trapped on our two icy poles we could only watch out to the hot silver sky, and know that the other could be watching too, and share one more moment of love doomed to fail and fail again –



## “La radio non è altro che la radio”

Most afternoons, six years ago, in the months running up to my moving day to London, I would tune into BBC Radio 1 as a listening exercise. I would come home from school, listen to the British broadcasters, and attempt to fish out words from what sounded like an endless stream of unintelligible blabbering. Occasionally, I would be halted by one of the then UK Top 40 songs – I only knew that’s what they were broadcasting because the web player had the generosity of displaying the title of the show. I would sit there, staring at nothing, listening. Inclusion was a strategy. My worthiness of living in the United Kingdom was inverse and proportional to the strength of my Italian accent. So the speaker on the BBC Radio 1 and I continued with our one-way conversations: I echoed his words, his intonation, even mimicked the facial expression I had imagined him to have. His *Good afternoon* was my personal test run of pronunciations: *Good afternoon* (too open, natural), *Good afternoon!* (enthusiastic – my consonants were still too sharp and defined), *Good afternoon* (smiling – gentler, better, curled at the end), *Good afternoon* (lower, rounder – closer, more British sounding?), *Good afternoon* (serious, even rounder – stereotypical, borderline comedic), *Good afternoon* (was that an attempt for Cockney?), and so on. I’d move on only when I’d reach a somewhat natural British sound.

\*

Read this: Oh.

How did you read that? Was it a blunt *O* or a softer, open *Ow*? Or maybe a closed *Ohw*?

Try again with different intonations.

**Oh... oh!**

Oh?

Think of the mouth as a house. From the roof at the top parallel to the tongue flooring the mouth – all fenced by the teeth and sealed by the lips. When speaking, all these elements work together: sound, like breath, lives and dies in the mouth – words end as they’re spoken, but they’re all born on different muscles reflecting a different pronunciation sound. In vocalisation and accent learning classes, the air in the mouth is sectioned in several spaces, including the nasal cavity. The sound, the accents and dialects, sit in one of those spots, or at their intersection. Learning this was like solving a life-long game of battleship; are your words in the middle of the tongue – on its body, closer to the throat – or are they right behind your upper teeth? Allow me to ask again: where are they from?

Linguists on the internet call letters lighter or darker, depending on where they live in the mouth. A consonant can be open or closed, lighter-sounding or deeper-sounding, narrow or wide. Apparently, the Australian accent lives right below your temples as the muscular tension does not allow for much movement. On the other hand, a generic North American accent will be hanging loosely from the jaw, demanding a fuller motion and a louder sound. When I explained this concept to my Irish friend, he showed me the emphasis of the chin in the Dubliner dialect and proceeded to push his chin forward and tilt his head back, almost like seeking a physical confrontation. The tension closed his speech. The generic British English, instead, is delicately placed on the lips. Gill from ‘Learn English with Gill (engVid)’<sup>1</sup> suggests pretending to hold a pencil in place between puckered lips to create the perfect British pronunciation, “or as if you’re about to kiss somebody!” she says. I tried, I really did – without the pencil though, but still, I tried to uproot my system.

Try this: hum while keeping your lips sealed. Place your fingers on your throat and seek where the vibration is stronger. Curl the air into the mouth and keep humming until you can locate it. You can play with that sound and move it, too; for example, lower the tone of your humming and push that vibration towards your heart. Let it reverberate through your chest. Now take it back to your throat – this time we’ll take it upwards. Follow a scale of notes, let them be progressively higher and higher – carry the humming, let it rest in your mouth. I shift through languages by nudging that vibration, back and forth. Italian is a fish hook piercing the roof of my mouth and opening the sounds wide – my *A* is not an *ay*, but a loud snap: *AH!* – a zig-zagging line hitting the highs and lows in rapid successions. English, at least my version of it, is a weight that dangles between the edge of my tongue and my trachea, never truly falling. And so, I push it with the words, but I hear myself shyly whispering a wavy line with no true peak or depth to it. English is made of controlled trips and I take courage to allow it to fall onto itself – for example, the ‘O’ is a circle drawn as it is said, a quick rising and falling.

Try reading this again: Oh!

\*

<sup>1</sup> Learn English with Gill (engVid) (n.d.). *Learn British accents and dialects – Cockney, RP, Northern, and more!*. [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDdRHWHzwR4> [Accessed 27 Oct. 2019].

I have recently noticed that my name and surname are audibly symmetrical. They both have eight letters, four consonants and vowels alternating one another with a steady pronunciation rhythm. It's really difficult, though, to pronounce them in English.

**Lu-do-vi-ca Co-la-ci-no**

The accent falls on the same syllable of each word, too.

**lu-do-VI-ca co-la-CI-no**

I drew my name and surname following the same pattern of my pronunciation. This is what they look like:



My first thought was that this heartbeat-looking squiggle could, perhaps, be an easier way to write my name, it could be a somewhat understandable guide on how to pronounce my name and make it "English-friendly". I was Ludovica at first, then Vica, Vicky, then I settled on Ludo, my nickname in Italy. "Luda?" people attempt to say, and I usually correct them; I go by as Ludo, *El-U-Dee-Oh*, restoring my self-inflicted erasure by remaining Italian-sounding. Today I live in two different phonetic houses and the radio is just the radio.



**A Cross Comparison of Marcus du Sautoy's  
conversation on creativity with Hans Ulrich Obrist,  
and Tom McLeish's book *The Poetry  
and Music of Science***

*This review is a cross comparative exploration between Professor Tom McLeish's 'The Poetry and Music of Science, Comparing Creativity in Science and Art (2019)' and a conversation hosted at the Serpentine Gallery between Marcus du Sautoy and Hans Obrist Ulrich, on Marcus' book 'The Creativity Code' earlier this year.*

Tom McLeish's book begins with genuine accounts of scientists striving and arriving through a creative process at a scientific understanding. McLeish aligns this methodology with that of the arts. The theoretical physicist is entirely supportive of the arts as an imaginative process. He writes, "To engage in art by creation or reception and re-creation is to exercise one of the capacities that makes us human. Indeed, the academic study of art's products and process falls under the class of disciplines we call the 'humanities'".

One of McLeish's greatest concerns, however, is the question as to whether to judge our children to be either "on the science side or the arts side [...] and then to make exclusive education decisions based on such dualistic assumption will be to trigger a process of atrophy in one or other aspect of those children's development".

As a painter, my favourite chapter of the book and personally a must read is 'Seeing the Unseen'. McLeish discusses notions of optics which to a scientist are probably commonplace but to an artist this cross-pollination of information is fascinating. Sub-headings such as 'Mathematical theory – painting' does not discuss the well-worn paths of Fibonacci sequences but instead looks at the mindset of 'the mathematician' vs 'the artist'. McLeish writes 'To listen to, and especially to watch the construction of models from the palette of mathematical ingredients draws comparisons with the making of preparatory sketches of paintings. [...] Both draw on an established visual heuristic.'

This leads me neatly onto the mathematician, Marcus du Sautoy's evening in conversation with the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist. Marcus du Sautoy's approach to the arts is quite different; as a scientist, du Sautoy essentially exploits the notion of aura.

In the most animated part of the conversation the audience were invited to conduct a poll via their mobiles. Two images were shown on a screen – one after the other – one was an original Rembrandt and the other a Rembrandt created from data. A mobile phone poll app was used to ask the audience which one was fake and which one was the original – this same process was then used for music and poetry. Then a percentage of the audience were made to feel mocked by the fact that a piece of AI had developed one of the paintings, pieces of music, or poems and the other was the real thing.

Something that seemed to be absent was the conversation regarding the mindset of the programmer – exploring who is doing the programming and who the programming is for? The programmer and the program – the algorithm is not a dead set of mathematical digits but a creation from the heart and minds of programmers. This ethics or 'visual heuristic' was not discussed. One of the essential take-aways of the talk was the concept of 'program or be programmed.' As du Sautoy said; "We are being programmed!"

### Afterword

As a result of this talk, I invited Marcus du Sautoy to discuss his understanding of creativity with Tom McLeish where I also challenged them both on the ethics of technology. A recording of this discussion can be found on Youtube under the name *Art With Science and Creativity*.

Find the video at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPiFa3oYq00](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPiFa3oYq00)

*Can algorithms, artificial intelligence and machines be truly creative? Is human creativity necessary for scientific progress? Join Marcus de Sautoy OBE FRS, Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science, and Tom McLeish FRS, Chair for Natural Philosophy at York University, in a conversation facilitated by artist Degard FRSA for Rawthmells, the RSA's 21st century enlightenment coffeehouse.*



**(Door i)**

In the stillness of darkness.  
A door appears with crystal handle,

manner marvel, and through its  
crack, just a simple sliver between

floorboard and flat panel, an  
unwelcome letter. An echo, pillow

swallowed, a slim vision slipping with  
songbird silence, the kind of voice

coming from an unnamed neighbor. It  
was just a short thought, an anodyne

allusions, never enough to live outside  
the hypnagogia of a.m. slumber.

**Dawn Dreams (of Doors)**

A grainy film slide, at moon drop melodrama. He  
has one hand by the lip— beer breakfast— of a glass

while his other hand rests, below brow bone  
forming shadow puppets with the palm wrinkles of

life lines. An odd gesture. Fate is a four-lettered word  
for nightmare. On an inky morning LA hangout he was

camera captured, a photo by B. Klein at daybreak's dawn  
dream. He sits by salt and pepper shakers and the kind of

retro sugar dispensers only found in American diners,  
used for morning coffees, late afternoon coffees,

and coffees for truckers and commuters who drive through  
the night. Headache or hangover how many ways can you say

Jim Morrison? He has his middle finger dipping, down  
into frothy hallow, the space where beer used to be but

now is half empty. The little bubbles remaining, slow draining.  
And behind him is a door, ajar, an entrance or exit. Could be

nothing more than a closet, a motion unfinished. Stuck  
somewhere between open or closed.

## Intra-

It an Alice-in-wonderland white rabbit's snare, a pocket watch slips under a Salvador sun. Where everything's inverted and where waking is just a feeling of system strain, simulacrum.

Locks, bolts and latches. We call it Surreal– a simple conjunction of French word for *super*, and Latin *res* as in *thing*, as a Dorothea Tanning painting of superthings. Dear,

Dear Dorothea have you ever been trapped inside a dream?

In the Mozart door-lined manic, a girl under lintel. Standing by a giant flower, titan flora, with no key, code, or atlas. Next to another girl with hair like an oil tinted cypress, born of brushstrokes, intramural.

## (Door ii)

~~I woke up.~~ A wall door or a thing of my imagination / mind's eye.  
It was closed. Most dream doors are. It ~~was closed~~ swung open.

I had fallen backwards, ~~linoleum beneath body~~. I woke up. Same old mattress, dream door departed.

~~I fell asleep.~~ I fell awake  
and passed into morning.

## Doses

A blind man, near blind man, maybe,  
mescaline, a cactus (bulbous) taken in  
small doses for sweet dreams of  
amphetamines. Eats button seeds,  
to live like Tanning trees. Enter  
'The Doors of Perception', the trip to a  
different dimension, modern mathematics.

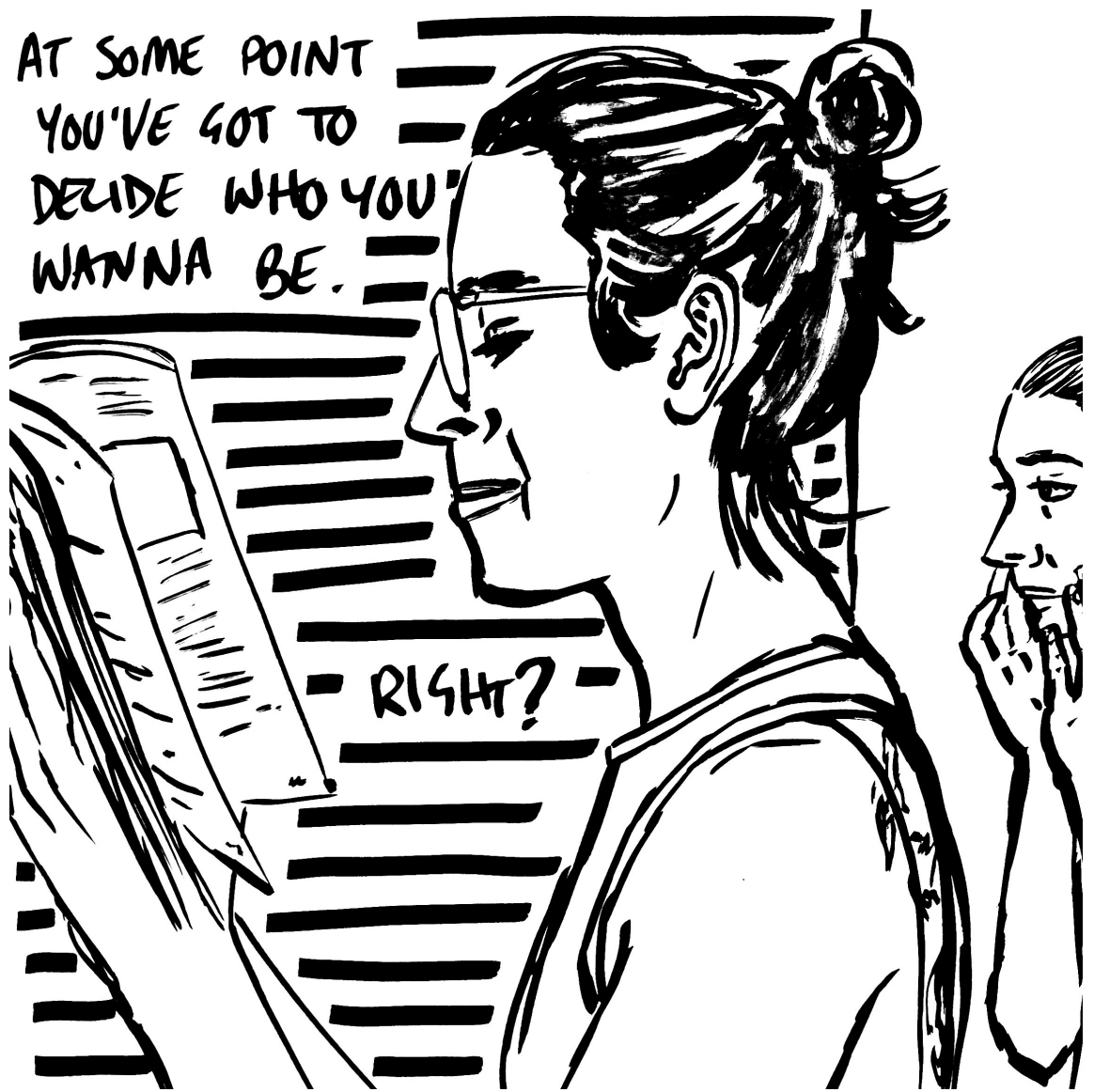
Are you familiar with this, the urging to escape?

A familiar with  
artificial paradise, a world of desert disillusion.  
Huxley writes of schizophrenia  
as the ability to escape  
a world of common sense.

But did he forget four letter difference  
between a simple disillusion, a mere  
disappointment, and the disorder that is delusion?







"Text: Moonlight 2016"



*Dear Art Students,*  
This is a plea for money.

Okay so I get it, we've invented time travel (or at least a way to send emails backwards in time) but the future is not looking great, I'm sorry. The insects have finally taken over. I'm writing from the only safe space. It's a shopping centre. I hope you're enjoying the past. It was better that way. I need money.

I'm not gonna lie, none of us could have seen this coming. I thought my money trouble would be the art degree not an insect-led revolution. I'd forgive anyone back then for agreeing future climate and ecological changes were predictable. All of us nodded at the beautiful computer models of shifting weather fronts and expendable populations and species and communities and silently decided not to make a fuss, it was a pretty agreeable and comfortable process agreeing that. Dear God, I mean none of them were particularly positive predictions, but if they made a computer model it must have been risk-managed you'd have thought. Couldn't be too bad if no-one else said anything or maybe I wasn't listening, anyway, facts are facts and I can't remember the facts about it so that's that.

The insects say we can come out if we renounce our ways, but we've barricaded ourselves into this shopping centre. If we don't stand up for our culture I don't know who will. A lot of real-life humans are dead in the future, they can't stand up. That's where you come in. Send money.

We don't *need money*, but send it. Or even better send me your card details. Please. Bury a card reader and your card details underneath the ground floor H&M in Westfield. I'll find it sixty years from when you're reading this. I want to rub my fingers over those vintage buttons on a contactless card machine again. I want to feel that buzz drawing and repelling every micrometre closer I get as I cradle your Monzo.

The giant insects have outlawed every one of our cultural traditions – it's so sad. If I'd known the climate crisis meant rising earth temperatures would allow insects to grow to humungous sizes I'd have pulled the pin on it a long time ago. Yeah I'm pretty sure we'd all have stopped global warming with technology. But all those computer models just showed the insects (and marginalised communities) dying, if I'm honest I want a refund from climate change, but capitalism's been outlawed so I'm not even allowed to say refund out loud. I could get admonished for writing this text. Disgraceful.

I was so excited when I found out I could write to people in the past, it's a real opportunity. My head is spinning writing this at the thought you might be able to send money. I'm imagining your card is almost touching the screen of the device. The muscles in my arm are locked all the way from my brachialis up to my neck and into my jaw, and your card and machine are touching in the future, mixing atoms between themselves entwining on the level of electron and electron as that huge crescendo builds up from the past until I lose control once and for all. Me, your card, the machine, and the machine beep crying out all together in one. Is there anything you can do, because I'd dearly love to touch a card reader again.

Lots of love from the future please and thank you.  
*Humanity*





In the next issue of The Pluralist we'll be considering the interplay between Self/Other. This can be interpreted as a specific, or narrow and open-ended prompt. You may wish to consider:

**Self-hood, self-obsession, self-care / The Other as in othering / Approaches to/obsessions with understanding ourselves / representations of self/other in art / the selfie / the 'other' in relationships / the 'other woman', the 'other mother' / etc**

# CALL OUT

## What we are looking for:

We are looking for reviews / creative writing / visual art / visual and text collaborations / essays / short form pieces / interviews / poetry / photography / documentation of work / manifestos / work in progress / opinion pieces / news pieces / short stories / personal essays / extracts / a screenshot of your notes app / and more...

Visual submissions accepted as well as pitches for collaborations with other students.

Non-English language submissions are welcome – we'd love to discuss your ideas.

We're always interested in hearing about sustainability and / or the ways that it is involved in your practice.

## Timeline for submissions:

Send us your pitches before the *3rd January 2020*

*10th January 2020* is the deadline for submitting finished texts or visuals.

Text submissions WORD documents or PDF with your name and the title of your piece  
Please clearly indicate any titles / subtitles etc in the document

Image submissions jpg or png

If your text contains footnotes please ensure these are correctly formatted (MHRA referencing style please)

*Send all submissions or pitches to [thepluralist.rca@gmail.com](mailto:thepluralist.rca@gmail.com) with the subject line*

*'Submission: [ISSUE NAME]\_[TYPE OF WORK]\_[YOUR NAME]'*