

//Introduction by Michael O'Rourke

So many coincidences: we, all four of us, Michael, Jeffrey, Ruth and Niamh, have a shared love and enthusiasm for the underground, rivers, the moon, dust, clouds, telepathy, stones, the sea above the sky, walking, etymology, ecology, noise, crypts, palindromes, collaboration and environment (among other things). We also have, not uncoincidentally, a mutual affinity for coincidences. Ruth and Niamh drew a Venn diagram which graphically depicted the overlapping topologies and topographies of our interests, obsessions, preoccupations. Our bodies of thought crossed, looped through, bordered on, neighboured one another; they circled, curved, rotated. In a word: loved. So it seemed right that this would be a four way collaboration or collaborotation; a four way tour of ROTATOR or a ROTATOUR.

//**Hydrocryptography** If one were to coin a word to in some way capture the work of Niamh Moriarty and Ruth Clinton it might be “hydrocryptography” (another possible candidate is geocryptography but the word would always have to turn on the “crypt”). I noticed—during one of my studio visits—that on Ruth’s computer she had Jacques Derrida’s “Force of Law”. I had, serendipitously, just that day been reading Derrida’s “Fors” which was published in 1976 as a for(e) word to Nicola Abraham and Maria Torok’s *Cryptonomie: Le Verbier de L’Homme aux Loups* (coincidentally a text about two Hungarian psychoanalysts and one which also features an analyst called Ruth). This is an essay about mourning, incorporation, introjection and melancholia and the divisibility of the trace or trait of mourning. However, given that ROTATOR is not, Ruth and Niamh assure me, about either mourning or melancholia, it is more interesting to explore how “Fors” is also about the non-situatability of writing. Where does writing take place? What takes place? On which surface? The very first lines, the two strange, estranging opening questions of the text perform this becoming-unlocatable of writing: “What is a crypt? What if I were writing on one here? (Et si j’écrivais ici sur elle?). Derrida goes on to point out that “what is a crypt” does not ask “what is the crypt in general but this one, in its singularity”. The word “crypt” is unanchored, de-situated as a concept. The reader, like the viewer of this show is marooned at the indeterminable location of a singularity, “this one”: felt, stone wall, rock, drainpipe, photograph, green light are all crypts as I hope will become clearer (or given the nature of the crypt to secret, perhaps not).

Derrida’s second question is even more estranging because it asks what is a crypt if I could be writing on one here, now? It is the concrete and not just the abstract sense of “writing on” that has to be reckoned with, that is, not just the idea of writing on a support, a surface, or the outer face of some construction, for example, the wall of a crypt, this one here. What if the support of writing could itself be a crypt? This, it occurs to me, is one of the major questions ROTATOR asks. We might also add the non-situatability of Clinton and Moriarty. They are not studio artists in the traditional sense. They prefer the “great outdoors” as Quentin Meillassoux calls it.

Yet it—their practice-- is more about worrying away at the boundaries between inside/outside. Are they a crypt? The strange and estranging final paragraphs of Derrida’s “Fors” are again instructive: He asserts: “a proper name is already never just one single simple vocable, if it always describes, beneath the articulation of a sentence and a scene, a multiple economy of places, instances, and safes, what happens, what supplementary complication, when the analyst [or artist] is several? Double, which in no way limits, on the contrary, that plurality? When the analyst [or artist] does not say I but, as we see it here, a distinctly uneditorial we? ... ”In rushing, at the risk of cutting off, the question “who signs here?” I am not asking, that goes without saying, which of the two, but how are they first-named, in their proper and common name(s): [Ruth Clinton and Niamh Moriarty]? [This is a] ... striking demonstration of Cryptonymy... I am thinking of the palaeontologist standing motionless, suddenly, in the sun, bewitched by the delicate stay of the word-thing, an abandoned stone instrument, like a tombstone burning in the grass, the

double-edged stare of a two-faced Medusa. And then I can feel, on the tip of my tongue, the angular cut of a shattered word”.

//To Wake: What if the support of writing on a crypt were water, the figure of writing on or in water, laying down traces of an experience the singularity of which must risk letting itself drown in repetition to become readable for another, if indeed it does before vanishing without a trace. Herman Melville talked of the “proverbial evanescence” of a “thing writ in water” and he writes that “a wake is to all desired purposes well nigh as reliable as the steadfast land”. We might note how the phrase “proverbial evanescence” plots the collision of meanings between that which lasts not at all or barely and that which survives through the immemorial citational power of poetic traces. For example, the large circle of felt “Lacuna” is written on with water; it is a work saturated with both the evanescent and the immemorial current. This centrepiece composes what Helene Cixous calls a “clothpoetic”. What is inscribed there is felt and on felt. Clinton and Moriarty are well aware that what is “writ in water” is also “writ in stone” and Melville seems to be alluding to Keats’s epitaph: “here lies one whose name was writ in water” a line eventually inscribed on his tombstone. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida speaks of the necessity of “a pathway” which, if followed, must leave a “wake” [sillage] in the text. Such a drawing out and tracing involves making one’s way through an immense legacy in such a manner as to leave a wake, in other words, a churning, as in “Spool-Loops”, through the text of tradition (or history) that brings again to the readable or legible surface matter that has sunk out of sight, all the while planting markers by which others may also navigate. Hydrocryptography will have been as necessary as it is impossible, as impossible as writing on water, at the risk of being drawn into the wake’s turbulence. ROTATOR takes up this challenge.

//Biogea: Michel Serres’ *Biogea* is filled with the stories of voices of seas, rivers, earth, mountains, volcanoes, wind, atmospheric phenomena, flora and fauna. Serres listens to the muted voices of the Biogea and asks what language it speaks. ROTATOR tries to decipher the languages of rivers, stones, rocks, the signals they emit, that they store, that they process and receive. Following Serres, Ruth and Niamh “attempt to open talks with” matter and “negotiate together” with it. “Thanks to the codes shared in this way, a mutual aid and benefit pact [which Serres elsewhere in *Malfeasance* calls a new natural contract]” is brought about so that “we can pass from parasitism to symbiosis together. That’s why I want to listen to the voices of the Biogea while comparing them with ours. Communication, interferences, translation, distribution, passages and bridges”. Like Jeffrey Cohen, Ruth and Niamh enquire into the language that this mute world speaks. For Serres this attentiveness will usher in a new aesthetics: “one that’s marine, land, air, burning, living, plant, floral, fertile, leafy, bushy, exuberant, animal, female, faunlike, fecund, bifurcating, proliferating, seasonal, womblike, diverse, composite, disparate, fragrant, winey, singing, dancing, enthusiastic, animated, whirling”. Serres prophesizes—at the end of a book which Jeffrey tells me he always stops before reaching because he wants to start (and be startled by) over and over again—“I will see, tomorrow, painters, architects, designers and sculptors, ceramists, filmmakers ... I will hear, tomorrow, poets and musicians ... celebrate, while bursting into laughter, the fertile humus and the opportune life of the Biogea”. That tomorrow is here, now.

//Veering: At a studio visit I see that the letter V on the girls’ computer has wandered out of place and is now glued to the front of the keyboard. V is for veering. Ruth sent Jeffrey and I a video of herself taking the ROTATOR tour at the dead of night. There is clanking, the disembodied spectral voice of the St. Michan’s tour guide, the phantomatic air or environment of a dream. Was this (will this be tonight?) a promenade of spectres, a strolling of ghosts or as Helene Cixous might say, the ghost of a stroll of ghosts? Jeffrey has described this show as “environmentally inflected” and in an interview on Lyric FM Ruth and Niamh have summed up

their practice as “diverting” and/or “culverting”. Given our shared fascination for walking and the origins of words it is worth noting that the word environment is etymologically tangled up with veering. In a book with that title, *Veering*, Nicholas Royle explains that “veering is intimately bound up with ‘environment’ a word with the French verb *virer* at its heart. This book [and we might add this exhibition] has the question of environment and environmentalism at its heart”. What ROTATOR has at its heart are the questions of preservation and environment, seeking out the submerged, buried, encrypted histories and languages of rivers, walls, rocks—of the Biogea. The artists take seriously Royle’s injunction to “reckon with veering”. In concert with Royle, their theory of veering, or what Cixous names “miswandering”, is “concerned to interrogate and displace all thinking of an environment in straightforwardly anthropocentric terms: if an environment environs, it does not merely environ the human. The human animal is not at the centre of the world”. The veering at work here is both physical and phenomenal: cameras, cloth, walls, ducks, water, hands, feet and much more besides turn, veer, lean, swerve, tilt, whirl, twist, deviate, seduce, zigzag. We are all, ROTATOR powerfully reminds us, bodies of water: ebbing, fluvial, dripping, coursing, traversing time and space, pooling as both matter and meaning. Veering gives a new turn to reflecting on and about our environment and our becoming/thinking with bodies of water. In their performance “Stoneybatter River Walks” Clinton and Moriarty invoke Serres: “Here, we will walk and talk parallel to the Bradoge, upstream and therefore backwards in time. To quote Michel Serres, ‘the past, the present, the future, the dawn of appearance and death, tenacious illusions, are only the declinations of matter. They decline and are declined like tenses of a verb, a word made up of atom-letters’”. ROTATOR is more attuned to the inclinations and glossolalic streaming together of matter; the exhibition is an exercise in diverculvertation as we drift from the territories of the infinitesimally small (our cells and bodily matter composed mostly of water) to the infinitely vast (rivers, seas, oceans, the sky, moon and stars).

//Introduction by NM and RC

Tonight’s discussion/tour will take the form of questions and answers between ourselves, Michael and Jeffrey. We have asked our friend and fellow artist John Ryan to stand in for Jeffrey and read aloud his answer. We wanted John to talk with us because he was our original connection to Michael and Jeffrey and for that we are very grateful. We all agreed that Skype interviews can often end up becoming fractured and uncomfortable, so in an attempt to exorcise this awkwardness we have decided to play out this conversation between friends. We are so glad to be able to work alongside and to have the support of these three brilliant people and we hope that this back-and-forth discussion will provide insight and amusement. We’d like to thank you all for coming here in this terrible weather, which has unearthed one of the hoardings around the lake next door, revealing it to the public at large and changing this work forever. Let us begin.

//Q1: Niamh to Jeffrey (Tour-2)

Can you tell us a story of your visit to St. Michan’s church (real and/or virtual) in relation to some of your thoughts about walking, stones and narrative as an enduring force, using this clue as a starting point:

Start to laugh inappropriately, perhaps heartlessly in the middle.

//A1: Jeffrey Jerome Cohen: TO CORPSE

I visited the crypt beneath St Michan’s and its mummified dead in a wandering summer, when I walked islands I’d only imagined. My companions were a backpack, a notebook, a few books,

some stamps, and a head too full of thought. A day before email and cell phones is impossible to imagine, but this story unfolds in that impossible time. Family could communicate by sending a letter "Poste Restante" and hoping I would arrive at my destination. While in Dublin I would check at the General Post Office for news from home, but nothing would await when I asked for letters in my name.

On my way to Ireland I spent a night of travel on the floor of a ferry, restless, swapping stories with two young men in their own wandering before entering the army. Their English was not fluent, my German worse, and we stuttered a conversation that included Latin. Sunrise as the ferry docked overpowered. I dropped off my backpack in a bad part of town and witnessed a man punch a neighbour so hard in the head that he fell unconscious to the pavement. Before St Michan's opened I stood by the Liffey and wondered what would happen if I dropped wallet and passport into the dark flow. What if, in this city where nothing arrived for me, I stopped wandering and vanished into the everyday?

The tour of the crypt was given by an elderly man with a glass eye. His script was relentless. It mattered little who stood with him. The guide was the kind of person whom later in life I might well attempt to force to inappropriate laughter -- and that moment would have been within the drab solemnity of the preserved cadavers. This nun, this reformed thief, this crusader in the vault could not have imagined their doom, an afterlife of display as curiosities, each become a memento mori and magnet for dire stories. Did they fit the narratives that now contained them, or were they like their bodies cut for their frame? Would they have laughed inappropriately at this guide, perhaps in the middle of his script, to remind him of their own wandering lives?

We were invited to clasp the hand of the crusader, for luck. I stroked an ancient finger from which the skin had worn after a thousand tentative touches, bone now protruding. My hand touched the stone of the body's interior, companion in movement and story and the guarantor of endurance beyond ferries, letters, passports and wanderings. I lingered too long at that clasp -- not because the touch reminded me of mortality (I did not need another tiresome reminder of what I well knew), but because I'd been corpsed into sudden, shared worldedness, into the intimacy of story, into a bond that unfolds unwilling with people and things we will never fully know yet strangely love.

//Q2: Jeffrey to Ruth and Niamh (Lacuna)

When water becomes emerald, how does it sound?

A lacuna is a gap, a hole, a pause, as well as a pool (a green lagoon). ROTATOR made me realize that if a stone were to be discovered at the bottom of Poddle's lacuna, that gem would be deep green, radiant, and full of story. Imagine that the stone is yours. According to some medieval lapidaries, rare emeralds tumble from Eden. They course out of the eternity that grips that garden, encircled by its endless brick. Freed into time, these precious stones find their way to human hands, companions for travellers. That vital lithic green -- shade of the Otherworld, hue for life, warning of water that must not enter the body (water does not exist for human use) -- that vibrant colour that glistens in the gem but also radiates like a small beacon: with what voice does green sound? with whose story does it glare?

//A2: Ruth Clinton & Niamh Moriarty

Pallas sits on an islet, encircled on all sides by the splayed currents of the underground River Poddle. We imagine that it is the island once ruled by the ancient giant: Balor, who had a basilisk

eye in the centre of his forehead. When opened, the eye would shine a deadly beam that devastated everything in his path. He was eventually slain by his grandson Lugh, who used his slingshot to hurl a savage boulder that blasted the eye out through the back of Balor's skull and down to the ground where it burned a gaping hole in the earth. The crater quickly filled with dark, silent water as nature's overwhelming sense of horror vacui revealed itself.

We are confronted, therefore, with a lake that appears simultaneously to be an unfathomable void, and a thick and viscid fullness. But a hole has been cut in the surface of the water and brought inside the Pallas walls, where the stolen lake now wavers between positive and negative states of being. I am reminded of the scene from *The Yellow Submarine* where, en route to the Sea of Green, the band find they are lost in the Sea of Holes. They bounce around, disappearing through various circular openings until Ringo peels one of them off the ground, declaring, "I've got a hole in me pocket!" Likewise this lake lies, inviting contemplation by or even total communion with its close observers (human or otherwise) who become like water, and drown in themselves. This fluidity repeats on itself: their focus doubles back, causing them to become *focussed* themselves; concentrated like light through a magnifying glass. And, as they thicken they become stony and dense, though still attuned to the water's influence; thinking especially here of the Latin *influentem*: "a flowing in".

Nearby, the Poddle's fresh current trickles tirelessly until it meets the cool, languid lake, whereupon it suffers a similar petrification; forced to suddenly stop. Faced with the lake's merciless stare, the river stiffens and for a moment becomes slow, sluggish and heavy. Where the two bodies of water crash together, a piece of the river is frozen stiff. Gorgonised, it collapses and falls away while the rest is swallowed by the monstrous lagoon. At the bottom of the lake, amongst fish and eels and other creatures not quite corporeal, the fragment gently rolls back and forth, becoming polished and glassy like the surface above.

We can imagine echoed whispers bouncing against stone, culvert walls and the roaring of a relentless tide but we cannot hear the Poddle as it pummels the dense, unyielding walls of stagnant lake water. Its subterranean rumbling makes our organs vibrate, giving us a feeling of dreadful unease and awe. In a dream, I reach out into blackness to lightly touch the glistening surface that lies a step away. I dip my toe into cool, dark liquid where it is submerged for a moment and pull it back out, letting drip. drip. drips. fall into a sleeping pond. The droplets send out a series of ripples that move concentrically from the point of contact, growing large as they extend to flow beyond the edges of the abyss. I stand still, transfixed while the disturbed water laps at my feet. As I gaze into the tumultuous, oscillating pool I can hear and feel my insides contorting in sympathy and terror: blood thumping in my eardrums, my stomach rumbling, and a pallid greenishness creeping upon my face. A nauseas, noisy sea-sickness.

We can see the reflection of a nimbus rain cloud on the lake's surface. It is solid, full of water in an otherwise airy, dry sky. It reveals its contrary twin in the mirrorworld of the lake- the dry clot cradled beneath folds and folds of viscous wetness. The stone does not roar for me; rather its noise is a kind of leakage that fuzzily communicates its resistance. Nebulous signals leak as though from the edge of a black hole that might annihilate all who listen too closely. The stone instead tunes into the water's waves and mimics them in its own metamorphic bends, or, if the rock is of the sedimentary persuasion, perhaps it attracts and compresses the lacustrine fizz and crackle: stochastic residue gathering like plankton in the arms of a starfish. It is ours because we know it's there, but will not seek it out, nor create the ripples that would disturb and destroy the stone that sits so delicately and patiently watching...

//Q3: Ruth to Michael (Poddle)

Clouds of static electricity gather in the air above the course of the River Poddle: layers of information and experience recorded in the atmosphere that replay in each passing mind like figures in television snow. Can you speak about the potential for fluvial telepathy or, in stronger terms, an empathic collaboration between walker and water? (Perhaps understanding empathy here as 'Einfühlung', meaning 'in-feeling', i.e. literal communion.)

//A3: Michael O'Rourke

Your question puts me in mind—or you telepathically transmitted it to me—of a very Michel Serres-like quote from William Blake: “I’ll shew you alive/The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy”. In this sentence we have it all: Breath/Life/Dust. Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*—which is heavily inspired by Blake—uses Dust as a metaphor for understanding a form of production—literary or artistic—which is divorced from the single originator or author and allows for impossible forms of communication that border on telepathy. In his depiction of the Republic of Heaven, Pullman gives voice to the ghost of a martyr in Limbo who says: “Even if it means oblivion, my friends, I’ll welcome it, because it won’t be nothing. We’ll be alive again in a thousand blades of grass, and a million leaves: we’ll be falling again in the raindrops and blowing in the fresh breeze; we’ll be glittering in the dew under the stars and the moon out there in the physical world, which is our true home and always was”. Pullman’s republic expands Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s notion of the “commonwealth” into what Levi Bryant calls “a democracy of objects” which “attempts to think the being of objects unshackled by the gaze of humans in their being-for-themselves”. The Republic of ROTATOR imagines a common space which includes people, plants, objects, and concepts, all those things that collectively construct the world around us.

Steven Connor’s book *Paraphernalia: The Curious Lives of Magical Things* focuses on objects which escape their own finitude, their “dourly objectish being-there to go beyond, or spill to the side of what it merely is or does. I am going to call [he says] this kind of thing a magical object”. One such species of magical object for Connor—and it seems to me for Niamh and Ruth—are pipes. The pipe he reminds us “may be thought of as the materialisation of a mathematical vector” since its function is to channel liquid on a particular path (as it does in “Poddle” here). But this idea of way-making eludes purposiveness insofar as the pipe’s being made to carry a flow—of water or other matter—gives way to the pipe’s own self-making as actant. As Connor says pipes “blindly” nose and bore their way along and are a “magical compromise between visibility and invisibility”. Crucially, he confides that: “Conspicuously, sometimes obscenely visible though they are themselves, pipes nevertheless conduct a secret ministry”. ROTATOR’s obscenely visible drainpipe is not used a carriage of flows but rather introduces a crypto-ocular. It conducts a secret ministry into the uncanny secrets of the hidden lake. The most striking feature of the drainpipe—which reminds us of the intimate passageways of the human body—is that it becomes a periscopic eye.

Hubert Damisch in his book *A Theory of /Cloud/* characterizes cloud as “matter” aspiring to “form” registering its provisionality and imminence. But just as clouds register the barely traceable they also index the immemorial and perdurability. What wakes is matter following form: writ in cloud. In his essay “Haze: On Nebular Modernism” Steven Connor extends a discussion on the visual registration of mist in the direction of an account of the atmosphere as a medium traversed and saturated with invisible radiation, communication and interferences. This electromagnetic cloud is what Serres in *The Parasite* calls “noise”, the “static” in a system. This noise is productive and creative. We might even say that it is pneumatic: animating spirit or breath. I’m reminded here that you can see an exhalation of breath (is it Niamh’s or Ruth’s?)

during “Spool-Loops”. Jeffrey has described collaboration, gathering together, in Serresian terms as a “gathering” with “aspirations” and “solidarities”. More precisely, he terms these new relational modes, comings-together, as a “kind of secular series of pneumatologies: exhalations of dispersed bodies, condensed ... on the windows of the world”. Collaboration is a nebular euphorics or atmospheric; A cloud gathering which I have elsewhere called “nubilogrammatology”. As Pink puts it in her current single Just Give Me a Reason (the video to which is, I think, the perfect visual companion to this exhibition) “we are collecting dust” in order to learn to love again.

One day, she has told me, a letter B mysteriously appeared on Ruth’s hand. In Jeffrey’s “Abecedarium for the Elements” it is B and not C that stands for the “brilliance” of Clouds. He says: “Clud is the Old English word for a mass of earth or rock, a clot” [like the rock which stands alongside the large felt circle here]. Though we consider earth dull, stone is heaving, metamorphic. It inhabits a span so slow humans miss its undulations...Cloud is a coruscation or churn of dusty water [like the water which seeps into the felt]”. Stone stories. It is what Jeffrey calls “storied matter”. Rivers also story. Stone and water “possess much of what is supposed to set humans apart. They are neither inert nor mute, but like all life are forever flowing, forever filled with stories”. That terraqueous transcorporeality between walker and water and walker and stone is precisely, as you say, a “fluvial telepathy”, one which demands of us an ethics of unknowable “in-feeling” or “communion”.

//Q4: Michael to Ruth and Niamh (Spool-Loops)

In a recent interview Ruth and Niamh are asked about why they work together. One answer they proffer in response is “company” or friendship. Derrida says that his book *The Politics of Friendship* is “mainly a book on Plato and Aristotle” and adds that “I think we need to read them again and again and I feel that, however old I am, I am on the threshold of reading Plato and Aristotle. I love them and I feel I have to start again and again and again. It is a task which is in front of me, before me”. But Derrida also insisted that it was “always too late, always too late” to start again. One way in which he responded to this always too lateness was through the movement of what he calls a palintrope. In Greek, palin means to move back, to go backwards, and also to do something again, to do something once more. The word is perhaps best known today as a palindrome, a word, a phrase, or number that reads the same backwards and forwards: for example ROTATOR or SPOOL-LOOPS, the title of this work. A palindrome starts and ends the same way. But a palintrope has a slightly different rhetorical flourish: it starts differently, with a start, it startles itself as it starts again. It ghosts. It veers. Rather than moving backwards and forwards through the same word, or over the same ground, the palintrope suggests a turning backwards that happens more than once, a turning backwards that—already—repeats, splits, doubles and exceeds itself. So is there a palintropic reading of “Spool-loops” or indeed the other works in ROTATOR? Is this 63-minute video a palintropically labyrinthine turning back, a backwards turn that turns back once more and always more than once? Relatedly, I want to ask if ROTATOR in toto travels a non-way which is a journey towards a possible, the possibility of, a history? In his reading of Aristotle’s graphic linear account of time Derrida notes that there is an unavoidable pause or gap (a lacuna) which he argues means that the line can only become a circle. The line as actuality, as presence, is a tracing that erases its own traces: it keeps going in circles. Derrida calls this *le tour du re-tour* which brings us back to the impossibility of beginning at the beginning of the straight line (hence our tour of the show). Do all of the works which make up the exhibition wander into a palintrope, an interlacing oscillation? For Derrida there are palintropic remainders, that remain and remain to come, the remainders that we turn back to, again, once more and find that they are already more than one. Are the remainders of

ROTATOR—and this relates to Jeffrey’s St Michans story—palintropic? Do the ghosts—the revenants who will not rest—come from the past or from the future?

//A4: Ruth Clinton & Niamh Moriarty

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

(T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding from Four Quartets, 1942)

Spool-Loops is more than a plain repetition. Every time we come to the end of a rotation, we are already beginning the next. When we turn the camera around, there is no possibility of a new start. Each turn contains our memory of the last and yet simultaneously it begins to erase itself. Think of the way a record groove might become worn down with each circular scratch of needle on vinyl. Likewise the wall might degrade with every playing; slowly breaking down and disappearing as it revolves. Do the materials have a memory? The magnetic DV tape does, certainly. It acts as an archive which, according to Derrida, suffers from a “mal d’archive”, a “compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return of the most archaic place of absolute commencement.” The archive is evidence of a desire to trace, catalogue, preserve and store information and is a manifestation of the repetition-compulsion which, in Freudian psychoanalysis, is inextricable from the death drive: the innate tendency towards a pre-organic state of non-being. The need for repetition and the search for origins is the impossible ambition of the death drive, which both ultimately prove destructive to the archive as it “invites forgetfulness, amnesia, [and] the annihilation of memory”.

We will start again. There is a history being inscribed onto the surface of the tape. Each turn is literally different from the last- the camera spit might have become stuck, or our hands have gotten colder, or we’ve unconsciously sped up in order to try and make the 63 minutes go faster. The line that can only become a circle is the brick wall, on the surface of the tape. If the tape loop were cut, and stretched out straight, the wall would fall down. It must remain circular, on a circular trajectory through space. When we started to make these Spool-Loops, we packed a bag full of tripods, spare batteries, rope, gaffa tape, cameras, dv tapes and a wooden spit and set out on a short trip to capture two hours-worth of film. We ended up making four journeys over two months, each time our experience of finding the wall and filming it was changed utterly. We turned, returned, turned, returned, turned, returned and turned again. Entry points to the secret garden were sealed off one by one, as neighbours filled gaps in the surrounding walls, attached 'no trespassing' signs, and cars beeped their horns at the sight of a pair of legs disappearing over a stone wall. Our devotion to the wall that we found so enchanting, to making this work and to each other made us return, each time with a heightened sense that the ruined wall with the circular hole was waning....

We imagine, then, the wall and the tape, side by side, but veering towards one another. They meet, for a moment, before the tape rolls up and the wall bends away. This little touch repeats at every single moment. Every moment is a new start. The wall is translated onto tape and now it only exists there. The word ‘translation’ can mean, “to render into another language; to express into another artistic medium; to interpret the significance or meaning of (an action, behaviour etc.); to remove or transfer to another place; to remove to heaven, esp. without death”. Saints were ‘translated’ into heaven, meaning that their bodies did not suffer the decay of mortal beings. With each rotation, another layer peels off the wall until it is translated entirely out of the world.

We will start again. The moment of doubt at the beginning of a new start is the condition for going on. The non-way, is as Derrida says, 'is the condition of walking'. With each decision to return, the wall becomes something more than a wall; like the Russian Formalist belief that: "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony". The Formalist technique often sought to emphasise the materiality of the medium, for example, in Zaum [Russian sound/nonsense poetry], words become things and acquire a substance. In the way that the language of ritual conjures a shared mood through what anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski termed "the coefficient of weirdness", the defamiliarised language of Zaum could unite the poet, or listener, "with the beings and things he's trying to influence or connect with for a sharing of power, participation in a life beyond his own, beyond the human, etc."

Perhaps by entering into some kind of empathic relationship with the wall/tape can we in fact begin to see past our limited perception of eternity? In 19th century psychological thought, empathy referred to the "placing of human feelings into inanimate things, plants, animals, or other humans" so that the subject's experience becomes fused with that of the object. Following the Greek *empathia*, this evokes a passionate state existing in opposition to apathy; an ecstatic mimesis that goes beyond the familiar sense of empathy as 'putting oneself in another's position' towards a stronger sense of communion. This ecstasy manifests itself in the fanaticism with which we pursued that wall. Maybe we also became enfolded between tape and wall while we were filming it. Ecstatically sandwiched between the two surfaces. Perhaps the wall might be envisaged as a cross-section of a pipe, or conduit: just one of potentially limitless numbers of circles lined up together. The space between these circles is the same kind of infinitesimal moment of a trajectory as when tape and wall meet. We examine simultaneously the unimaginably small places where things might meet, and their place in a potential eternity.

We will start again. Just as those limitless circles are real, all moments past, present and future, always have existed and always will exist. In Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, the character Billy Pilgrim becomes unstuck in time- swinging through different moments in no particular order, forever. Billy lives his non-sequential life again and again, but his awareness of what is happening to him makes each experience irrevocably different. Vonnegut says that on the far away planet Tralfamador, (where Billy is transported at some point) people can "look at all the different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of Rocky Mountains... They can see how permanent the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever. When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in a bad condition at that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is 'so it goes' and so on."

We will start again. In order to find a way of demonstrating the kind of palintropic circularity that we are attempting express, we played an online game of 20 questions, which we will re-enact for you in a minute. The computer's guesses are usually very accurate because each time somebody plays, it learns from their answers. The answer that we had in mind was "a game of 20 questions". We wanted to see if the game guess could itself, and maybe have a moment of self-reflexive epiphany that would also represent its circular journey back into itself. The options given to the player, as well as the usual 'yes' and 'no', are 'Unknown, Irrelevant, Sometimes, Maybe, Probably, Doubtful, Usually, Depends, Rarely, and Partly'. Although it didn't guess

correctly in the end, some of the questions and guesses were mysteriously, and coincidentally, connected with this exhibition. It went like this:

1. Is it classified as Animal, Mineral, Vegetable, Other, or Unknown? **Other.**
2. Does it help accomplish tasks? **Irrelevant.**
3. Do you hold it when you use it? **No.**
4. Can you buy it? **Sometimes**
5. Is it hard? **No.**
6. Is it a nocturnal animal? **No.**
7. Can it be played? **Yes.**
8. Can you find it in a church? **No.**
9. Would you use it in the dark? **Irrelevant.**
10. Are there many different sorts of it? **Yes.**
11. Can you play games with it? **Yes.**
12. Is it electronic? **Sometimes.**
13. Do you use it in public? **Maybe.**
14. Is it an abstract concept? **Yes.**
15. Do you open and close it? **No.**
16. Does it have cash value? **Irrelevant.**
17. Is it a lottery? **No.**
18. Is it comforting? **No.**
19. Can you get information by using it? **No.**
20. Is it a palindrome? **Yes!**

We don't believe that every work in ROTATOR sets out to be palintropic but we hope that a palintropic treatment of history, experience and time can be found at the heart of each piece. We chase eternity along the surface of a wall, which, with each re-visitation, becomes increasingly fragile. Yet, like the stony stones, becomes more Wally too. The last word, of course, will have to go to Wallace Stevens:

*Poetry is the subject of the poem,
From this the poem issues and*

*To this returns. Between the two,
Between issue and return, there is*

*An absence in reality,
Things as they are. Or so we say.
(The Man With the Blue Guitar, 1937)*