

# Editorial

HANNAH LEVENE, D M MORTIMER, ODHRAN O'DONOGHUE

The word 'synergy' is used so frequently as to be abstracted beyond all meaning. Although these days it is mostly thought of as an empty buzzword thrown around with reckless abandon by the life coaches and CEOs of the world, the word's Greek root, 'sunergos' has a rather more utopian meaning: 'working together'. In choosing 'synergy' as the theme for this fourth issue of *RoundTable*, our intention was to play with this tension between its origin and contemporary usage. In an academic context, synergy can mean novel ideas, interdisciplinary working, and cross-institutional collaboration, researchers transcending boundaries between different fields, institutions, and nations. But in the neoliberal university, synergy often functions just as it does in the corporate world, with the promise of 'bold new directions' and exciting developments' used to distract from overwhelming workloads, precarious employment, and worsening labour conditions.

It was with this paradox in mind – the desire to do innovative creative and critical research in the humanities while knowing that, working as we are from within the academy, we cannot separate ourselves from the market forces that increasingly curtail academic freedom – that we chose the articles for this issue of *RoundTable*. All the authors whose work appears within are, in one way or another, drawing on a multiplicity of forms, ideologies, and methodologies to blur the traditional boundaries of academic research.

At the heart of this issue are three experimental creative–critical works. In 'Valentine's Day 2020', Emily Scarrott documents a key moment in her practice based PhD, in which she explores the absurd through a non-cis-male lens by performing durational care to an egg. Kole Fulmine ponders the queerness of 'the between' in their work 'Kitchen Corridors', in which a character considers

whether to begin taking hormones, while Vivienne Griffin's fragmentary, genre-defying 'Fake Haven' is a walkthrough for an imaginary video game that pushes the limits of practice-based research. These creative interventions are joined by Rosemary Ojone Ajibogwu's article on discourses of intersectionality in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

Completing the issue are four reviews of recent books whose ideas and methodologies occupy the liminal space between art and the academy. Aimee Hinds finds much to admire in Alexis Pauline Gumbs' *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*. This journal's three editors wrote the remaining three reviews. Hannah Levene recalls falling asleep in front of Derek Jarman's *Blue* in some gallery or other in a playfully subjunctive review of So Mayer's *A Nazi Word for a Nazi Thing*. Odhran O'Donoghue questions the limits of subjectivity in Mira Mattar's astonishing *Yes, I Am A Destroyer*. Finally, D M Mortimer draws on recent personal experiences in their exploration of *The Sense of Brown*, the last work of the late, great queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz.

Connecting all the work in this issue of *RoundTable* is a refusal of the standard terms by which society defines our existence. By engaging in radical approaches to academic research, our contributors are helping to broaden understandings of what it means to resist that mandate – in both the academy and the wider world.