



**CP Reader's Union at Housmans Bookshop  
Developing and Contact – *Pure Means* by Yve Lomax**



**‘... the truly philosophical element in every work, be it called literature, art or science (or whatever) is its capacity to be developed. This capacity in a work arises precisely when a reader steps in and, as it were, picks something up to take it further.’**

**Copy Press invites you to join  
Cecile Malaspina  
Jess Potter  
and Kristen Kreider  
developing *Pure Means***

**Friday, 6 February  
6.30 – 8.00pm  
Housmans Bookshop  
5 Caladonian Rd, London N1 9DX**

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*Pure Means: writing, photographs and an insurrection of being* by Yve Lomax: isbn 978-0-9553792-91-2  
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## Pure Means

Cecile Malsapina

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*Pure Means* talks about the free act of appearing, as *what being does for a living*. And it distinguishes this free act from the work of representation imposed on the image as a function of purpose. What *Pure Means* is after is a moment in which what appears to us as reality tilts, teeters in a moment of dynamical suspension, revealing, as when one stumbles, the movement of showing itself, rather than that which it represents. Suspended in its movement, and nothing but the image of this movement, this moment *presents* an image of *pure means*, where momentarily no rule determines *what* it shows and *how* and *for whom*.

For it to be so, it must occur of its own accord and show this act of showing itself, as *pure means*, without purpose of representation. And if this is so, if such a moment can indeed be thought and even experienced, then we must consider it as a first principle, an unconditioned act that has the function of an *arche*, of a first principle of showing: the 'Ur-image', if you like. Consequently it cannot be *subject to* another rule or principle of showing and could thus be thought itself as the *subject of* a free act of showing.

This is how I would like to interpret what *Pure Means* calls 'a moment of grace', which occurs when the *work* and *effect* of showing *something* is suspended in the *gesture* of showing, which is now free to show itself as pure means. For Yve Lomax this is a joyous moment, even a celebration, as in a national holiday, when all work ceases and life regains its rights.

This idea of celebration struck me when I read it, because I have been thinking about this pure act of showing as the experience of what we call noise; not of *noises* and *annoyances*, but *the mental state of* noise – when the selective boundary of our attention is no longer operative, when it fails to filter the plenitude of sense perception according to criteria of pertinence and purpose. Although similar in its unconditioned state to *pure means*, the mental state of noise is not necessarily and even unlikely to be joyful: it can be catastrophic. Instead of a celebration it can herald the catastrophic reaction to an uncontrollable state of mental crowding and confusion.

Is not the panicked attempt to exclude noise by imposing a radical closure of perception around a narrow focus the dramatic alternative to the celebratory scenario of just letting 'showing' show itself without constraint of purpose or signification? In lieu of a joyful freedom of perception, the catastrophic reaction is the desperate attempting to overcome the loss of control and re-establish order, however limited, through the rigidity of rules and the narrowness of focus.

Now where my interest in noise intersects with *Pure Means* is in the question of freedom and anarchy. Because if, like *Pure Means*, we want to know how being can appear of its own accord, as noise or as joyful showing, in any case as *a law unto itself*, rather than *thus, for us* and at the service of *this* representation, then we must ask where laws come from, and if they come from other laws then *what is the mother of all laws* that can be law unto itself? In other words what grounds the principle of showing, if it is grounded in nothing but itself?

This question, in my view, is another way of asking on what grounds we draw the limit that separates the rule-bound from the unruly and form from the formless? For freedom surely is not merely the absence of this limit or the subversion of all rules, which would make it an entirely negative value. Is freedom not rather the normativity inherent in ruling our own lives and hence a question of self-determination in drawing, effacing and redrawing this limit?

*Sapere aude* – this is of course Kant's famous conclusion to his text about the Enlightenment. We usually think of this as enjoining us to free ourselves from dogmatic ideas and despotic constraints imposed upon reason: this is *critique* in its negative function of analysing and dismembering the persuasive power of dogma. But to think freely also implies seeking a first principle of reason, a grounding moment *in the movement of thought itself*.

Kant was of course aware of the problem that a first principle or cause, is only truly a first principle, if it is preceded by no other. It must be a *free* cause, if it is to be first cause, for otherwise it would be mere effect. A kind of anarchic origin of acts and rules thus necessarily precedes the first principle of reason. Kant calls this the *abyss of reason* and the *vertigo of the philosopher*. This is where the critique has a positive function of constructing the first branches upon which reason may tread carefully.

If we now think again about the expression *sapere aude*, then the daring of critique must be thought as confronting not only tyrants and dogmatics, but also the abyss of reason, which *must* be thought as the ground of reason, yet *cannot* be thought, because the rules of reason have no jurisdiction over it.

The invitation for the event 'Developing *Pure Means*' says: '*the truly philosophical element in every work, be it called literature, art or science (or whatever) is its capacity to be developed. This capacity in a work arises precisely when a reader steps in and, as it were, picks something up to take it further.*' In the meantime *Pure Means* says: '*the deactivation/non-activation of separation [...] deserves the name the critical attitude.*'

But it is of course critical of Kant's *critical* division that separates being *in itself* from being *for us*. If *Pure Means* picks up the project of a critique to take it one step further, then we can be sure it is not in the direction of a constructive critique in Kant's sense of a critical boundary between being *in itself* and being *for us*. *Pure Means* picks up the project of critique *in reverse gear*, not as a negative critique, but as a step into the abyss of reason, where being is expected to show nothing but itself. The question is: what happens to reason when it dares to take one step into the abyss of this *originary freedom* of thought?

In *Pure Means* Yve Lomax says: a necessity has pushed me, I did not refuse or resist. Where the philosopher is seized by vertigo and teeters before the abyss of reason, Yve Lomax, like Sapho, the Greek poet, before her, feels her heart thump: '*I, at your sight, remain voiceless,*

*my tongue breaks, fever devours me, my eyes blur, my ears roar, I sweat, I shiver, I feel nauseous, I believe I shall die [...] but I must dare.*<sup>1</sup>

So what happens if we take this one step further, *into* the abyssal ground of reason? Will it be a moment of *bliss*, as reason is suspended in free fall and reveals nothing but its own movement, as the pure means of thought, or does it end in the catastrophic unravelling of reason? On this point I am uncertain. It seems to me that the absolute contingency of ground, from which both being and reason emerge as first principles, may not be a warm embrace in the bosom of nature: reason may have no safe haven in the ultimate contingency of ground, there may be no love waiting for us on arrival, but desolation and the disappointment of finding no ground, only pure contingency as absence of ground, which can crush as easily as it may gift a moment of grace.

The only two alternatives I see to the catastrophic reaction is either to fly, suspended in free-fall for as long as possible, as *pure means* of thought, or else for reason to pull itself up *by its own boot-straps* and posit itself, in an *axiomatic* gesture, as its own ground.

'It is the division of a division', Lomax says, meaning presumably Kant's division between being *in itself* and being *for us*. But we could also see in it the attempt of a *rotation* of this division, because *Pure Means* is about rendering inoperative a distinction *that hadn't been on the table until now*, which is not Kant's division between *noumenon* and *phenomenon*, between being and appearing, but an implicit division between being, as constrained to appear *for us*, and the power of being to appear *of its own accord*.

The critical gesture here is to render inoperative something that is supposed to work, but *goes unnoticed* until it stops working, which is the implied obligation that showing will always be a being *for us*. When the critical apparatus of representation is temporarily out of service, then we are in a state of *stupefaction*, while nature does what it always has done, which is to emerge and appear of its own accord, whether we can make sense of it or not. Except that in this moment of cessation of its *work for us*, when it is not appearing of *for us*, but appearing nevertheless, being is no longer contractually constrained by *either* the *spectacular effect* of reason or, failing that, to be banished into darkness – not only *incomprehensible*, but *unseen* and unheard.

If we're lucky or daring, we may experience this moment of pure showing not as the mental state of noise, but as a moment of grace, which we experience as an insurgence of being, a riot, a party: we are *stupefied*, intoxicated, '*berauscht*'. And the dancer *Pure Means* speaks of is no longer the shy, introverted *essence* of being that needs reason's help to let its hair down, the dancer is not being *in itself*, but a bipolar being that appears of its own accord and that has no trouble being both elusive, withdrawn *into itself*, and terrifically extrovert, whose appearance takes reason by surprise and jolts it into action.

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<sup>1</sup> Sappho, Frédérique Vervliet, and Raphaël Drommelschlager, *Le désir* (Paris (9 rue Fénelon, 75010): Éd. Mille et une nuits, 1994), 7.

*Pure Means: a response*

Jess Potter

6-2-2015

*In reading Pure Means we encounter a series of questions that ask about what it means to be in common. The book writes itself in the process of being written and ends with a title or beginning. It is alive to thinking about being. It calls for a critical attitude in the face of apparatus' of separation. It considers the photograph and gesture in the light of human singularity that may incline away from division towards another kind of being.*

*I think about this, and what it looks like. Pure Means responds to a force, a pressing series of questions that are taking place in the midst of being and in the midst of language but also in the midst of our world. So, with writing taking place as I read it, I am asking what our roles as readers are in this space, this common space – can we incline towards each other?*

*I think about what these questions show and what they demand in the process of writing. The man at the door declaring that his voice is not his own, a theatrical gesture, reminds me of trying to make photographs about the space between beings, of trying to describe this space or give it voice, and of feeling very strongly that this voice must not be my own. This leads me to think about voices and how they are represented and conveyed, voices that speak against each other, or voices in common. I think about the voices of Twitter and Facebook, and the voices of Charlie Hebdo, the other voices present in writing, the relation between voices and faces. I think about Brecht.*

*I have read Pure Means in the utterly fragmented space of motherhood between the gestures of caring, feeding, sleeping, crying and smiling – a jumbled relation of physical activities set within domestic space. In this space I operate with another*

*being through the emergence of language and attachment. In this space operativity and inoperativity take on a particular form or ask me to question my notions about what kind of operations I am undertaking, and what my function as a mother and as an artist may be. Language, Gesture, Voice and Division/Non Division take on a particular force that I feel profoundly but also don't really know how to express or represent whilst lodged in a singular space, in a singular body with a singular being. Pure Means has woven through this space and my thinking about it. I have been moved by thinking about insurrection and celebration but also of the pressing desire to write and to think in a critical attitude about the author as a gesture, the author as a question, as a body that is moved by necessity, that demands and presses for a critical response.*

*I hear it said that:*

*'The more actions are interrupted the more gestures we obtain'*

*that:*

*'in the midst of a gesture there arises ... pure means'*

*that:*

*'an inclination can occur. And this inclination, (can be called) a life! (p.22)*

*I think about inclination, life, critical attitude ... what does this look like? How is a gesture made apparent? Can it be seen, leaning, bending ... the gesture of a gesture – what we have in common, what inclines us towards one another? Between the chapters of the book the grass and flowers incline and I stroke the surface of the paper to feel them and remember trying to describe a small patch of grass and thinking about the particularity of that grass. The process of writing inclines us towards things, like grass, like rocks, like one another. Inclination leads to gesture, which leads, possibly, to originary freedom and an idea for a written work. It is said that 'an originary freedom can have us – whomever – grasping, embracing and enjoying the moment of arising ...' (p.35) This arising is said to be both ancient and present, like a stone. And I have been thinking a lot about stones lately. I am interested in this idea of arising being archaic and contemporary in relation to language and our being in common. I think about the new geological time that has*

*just been articulated, the 'anthropocene', and as this is considered the physicality of the paper articulates itself, flapping, folding, scrunching: the materiality of things present a critical attitude.*

#### **LET IT HAPPEN**

*Later in the book the problem of the photograph is raised. Can the photograph capture and not separate? Can the photograph be in the midst? It is said that 'a capture holds the possibility, if only just, of a return; a return that brings reparation and restitution.' (p.55)*

*I wonder about the photographic image and the digital image that operate between us and are constantly in transit. The folding in and out of digital space and the apparatus' that are at play. Alongside this comes the question of the life worth living and where it can be found and it is said that 'that which is called a life is utterly common'.*

*I think about this as the feeding, caring, crying, sleeping cycle continues. I think about inoperativity, learning for learning's sake, like the cat and the ball or the child and the rattle, the object that appears and disappears to great delight. A rhythm, or interruption that shows an understanding of objects: the celebration of presence and absence, the play of those attachments that forms the first games of human or nonhuman interaction. Pure play and living inoperativity; flapping paper and waving arms. I think about examples of Pure Means, pure play, inclining showing itself, language showing itself ... world and language taking place as I pick up a small toy and shake it and smile. The writing is punctuated by paper, folding, unfolding, flapping. My reading is punctured by the gestures of caring and so the idea of gesture, language and human animal remain open. As the book progresses the texture of the grass comes closer.*

## BEAUTIFUL

*It is said that we share phenomenology and I think again about how the camera can operate as a space between beings – not as a form of capture or control but an open space of encounter. Pure Means speaks of this double kind of capture and shows special and species having a common root: to show oneself.*

*Species*

*SPECIAL*

*Beautiful*

*Giving to be seen – the act of photography – special and common*

*‘The sharing of an intimate relationship between species, special and beautiful.’*

*(p.84)*

*is drawn out.*

*I play hide and seek with a child, a baby who just realizes that the act of disappearance and re-appearance is a game. This is shared play, being together: the look of the photographic image that shows and shows and shares. What is sharing as opposed to division and ownership? The common space, the common land, digital space, spaces of communication? Sharing exists outside forms of governance and outside forms of capital, outside of exchange. Sharing is about communication: putting ourselves into play – showing oneself and exposing oneself. In this book, being dominates over having, being that is inclined towards one another, that is sharing and maybe there are ways in which apparatuses of technology, and of the image can engage in this showing, sharing inclination. Pure Means speaks of this – between reader and author, within being – showing. Pure Means writes about these actions and gestures – yet it is already happening, we must let it happen.*

*I wanted to end by reading a small text by Lydia Davies called ‘Two Characters in a Paragraph’:*

*The story is only two paragraphs long. I’m working on the end of the second, which is the end of the story. I’m intent on this work, and my back is turned. And while I’m*



*working on the end, look what they're up to in the beginning. And they're not very far away! He seems to have drifted from where I put him and is hovering over her, only one paragraph away (in the first paragraph). True, it is a dense paragraph, and they're in the very middle of it, and it's dark in there. I knew they were both in there, but when I left it and turned to the second paragraph, there wasn't anything going on between them. Now look ...*

*dream*

*(Lydia Davies, Can't and Won't, Hamish Hamilton, 2014, p,217 )*

## Notes

*The Anthropocene: coined by Paul Crutzen in the last decade to define our era from the Holocene ...*

*'Would the anthropocene satisfy the criteria used for naming a new epoch? In geologic parlance, epochs are relatively short time spans, though they can extend from tens of millions of years. (Periods like the Ordovician and the Cretaceous, last much longer ... ) The boundaries between epochs are defined by changes preserved in sedimentary rocks – the emergence of once commonly fossilized organism, say, or the disappearance of another.*

*The rock record of the present doesn't exist yet, of course. So the question was: When it does, will human impacts show up as "stratigraphically significant?" .'*

*Long after our cars, cities, and factories have turned to dust, the consequences of burning billions of tons' worth of coal and oil are likely to be clearly discernible. As carbon dioxide warms the planet, it also seeps into the oceans and acidifies them. Sometime this century they may become acidified to the point that corals can no longer construct reefs, which would register in the geologic record as a 'reef gap'. Reef gaps have marked each of the past five major mass extinctions. The most recent one, which is believed to have been caused by the impact of an asteroid, took place 65 million years ago, at the end of the Cretaceous period; it eliminated not just the dinosaurs, but also the plesiosaurs, pterosaurs, and ammonites. The scale of what's happening now to the oceans is, by many accounts, unmatched since then. To future geologists, Zalasiewicz says, our impact may look as sudden and profound as that of an asteroid.*

*Elizabeth Kolbert, 'Enter the Anthropocene – Age of Man', National Geographic, March 2011*