



Source: Peter Beaumont, 'To leave Iraq would be as disastrous as to remain', *The Observer* in *Guardian Unlimited*, 03/09/06.

Tags: [literature](#), [music](#), [Iraq](#), [war](#)

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Meanwhile, there is a story to be written but I can't seem to add anything up. I can't do this by halves, so I try again, I keep subtracting, keep dividing the numbers, nothing shows up, only in the negative.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written but the generals talk and when the generals talk you better listen to them. Burning that oil at midnight, assessing the conditions, for in this country we're heading towards something but never seeming to arrive.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and we've gotta keep it short, okay, 1001 words or less, which is actually a lot considering there is some kind of formula being used here, on the part of the writer, making words come out that never seem to reach any kind of conclusion.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written but my mouth cannot seem to form a perfect circle, a zero, on account of mathematics. Can you hear the noises outside, the sound of my camera, the day as it turns? I am the perfect model for you, right now, as you are watching.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and I am endlessly grinding to a halt but never stopping. Oh but...listen, actually, in actual fact, it isn't, you know, happening, just yet, something gets 'put off', but I am 'onto it', but really, by doing this, can you tell me, what are the conditions?

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and it's late. The sound of Joy Division's *Atrocity Exhibition* influencing yet another band of men, another dirge-sound ringing out, pitch-shifting in my ears, so loud, like a bomb, and despite the fact that I'm okay, I'm alive, I'm not really at risk of being caught in the cross-fire, there is still some danger in the not-saying, the not-doing, the not-reading.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written but never quite arriving. There was no obligation to take any kind of cue from some journalist's words, no reason to spend hours trying to make sense of a brief report, or to construct some kind of translation that would work well in performance, no, nothing to indicate that at all.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and it's all academic. Who is disseminating the information, who is fucking with the figures, who is writing things up, I mean, really, who pays the toll, you know, who speaks up and says, yeah, it was me, I am the one, I'm holding the popular view, I'm keeping things in check, I've got my sights set on the bigger picture and it's going around in circles.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and who knows where this is heading. It's anyone's guess but I've got my money on the night, cos once the sun goes down everything changes, everything looks different in the dark, people, side-streets, words written on a wall, in the dark when most people sleep and some just can never

sleep again, doing that counting thing and hoping for morning.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and I still aim high. My expectations rising but never quite reaching their peak, but I insist, it is not in actuality a story, but I try to tell them and they just keep moving, backwards and forwards, never in the same place at the same time, always making the most of it, zero waste, taking up the slack where others left it behind, so that has to account for something, that's gotta bring some kind of end to things, some kind of conclusion, some sort of end to this mess.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and it's approximately 5.20pm, London time, United Kingdom. I say approximately because there is some room for error in the process of conversion and anyway, in the lag of this technology it is highly likely that you would have missed that part, that bit of information or worse still, forgotten that I'm not with you in your home town and because I can't spend all my time figuring this stuff out I've opted for the default excuse of 'approximately'.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and we're up to word number seven hundred and nineteen and that's a fact. There is no room to move on that one and I can guarantee that it is indeed factually correct and checked, despite the realisation that it is a number, not a word, but written down, all together, it is a string of words with the word 'seven' beginning the string, so in actual fact, by the end of the string of numbers we have actually reached number 721, if, and only if, you don't include 'and' in the equation.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and perhaps, soon, we'll have to shut up and accept the nightmare scenario. Sorry I realise it's not ideal and it's certainly not where I'd personally expected this to go, but then, what I said, before, about being academic and all that, well that's pretty much it, isn't it, the facts and figures are all well and good until someone (really) loses their life in some insurgent neighbourhood in some place in some armed attack, a neighbourhood with a name most of us can't pronounce, or remember, once the eyes are taken off the page.

Meanwhile, there is a story to be written and apparently we are left with no choice. No choice to stay, no choice to go, no real going back now that the damage is done, eh, now that so much is undone and pretty much bloody death is a daily grind, so much ambush, attack, the dogs went in, off the leash, they went in, when once the word 'liberation' seemed sort of like a positive thing or a kind of release, well, yeah, release happened I guess, the floodgates etc...but I do go on.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Jason Sweeney, Unreasonable Adults.*