

Story for performance #581
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Source: Abraham Rabinovich, 'Inquiry into Lebanon war will decide the future of Olmert', *The Australian online*, 22/01/07

Tags: [intimacy](#), [language](#)

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Her trouble at the moment was physical, between herself and today. Enclosed in a book between moments of the social, nothing she touched stood at attention against the sea of text. Most words only filled up slowly with the meaning glare of day. Leaning over the empty place she felt she could speak herself otherwise, be a spy in the symbolic order. Her turned up collar and her cigarettes would be manifestations of ambiguity. Agents lack any essence, as distinct from existence: their identity is a trick of the hands, and she could not fold her own protectively against the outside. Through the door she watched history, class struggle and the relations of production. Her fingers withdrew questions from her pocket.

The codes of genre already plunged into the black ocean, she slowly started to write the letter:

'We haven't met before. I should describe myself as ontologically impure, agitated, erratic, punctuated by thoughts of some unprecedented drive to speech. A pressure which can no longer be hushed up. I must say this: I am now at the limits—out of conventions, out of styles and idioms, out of connotations and collocative sets, out of clichés, formulae and proverbs and out of breath. Coming to dead stops, I began to worry. I went and put a foot wrong and the reassuring notion of monstrous heresy was the source of music. Writing is a sort of overrun of the surrounding lawns, at once unheard and on the point of saying. It is to be found by doing, step-by-step, often uncomprehending into the time when the regularities of day go off duty. I cannot remember for whom I am responsible. Levels of temporality interfere, and in this passage it is not possible to move without confusion. It is almost as if I have really fallen to it, this evening, the corpus of writing in the pool of night...Texts are made of roses from the trodden grass. That's all I can say.'

She was not to know the refusal of an answer. The letter might have been written by some unknown dead face in the source of dusk. It must have been a time bomb waiting for him. He had the idea that everything it set up might be the delayed effects of the hands of ghosts, his eyes shifting from the page as he stopped and thought.

'You?' he threw back, 'How do you mean, met? To write of the real and recognition is what establishes the need to be constantly suspicious, marked and careful, walled by thickets. Lest this be too subtle, qualities such as a jerk of the head in the sense of a social unkindness are required to mean what they say. An accredited concept supposes the passage through the hard resistance of representation. Take up a firm line! Differentiate the referential from the rose gardens. There is no saying until you see. Drifting onto the grass is equivalent to the abolition of meanings stored in an entire summer.'

She had given him, the watcher, her postal address. His tone was a direct hit somewhere else. She turned away to rewrap herself in a complex network of discourse: a

corpus—the title, the margins, the signatures. Correspondence, non-correspondence. Between these two moments one exposed oneself in this conflictual relation to the other. She hung for just that instant more between a plurality of disparate domains until the glissade stopped, having suspended the music in the shadow of an idea. Some submerged dream had fluttered to the ground. Yes, he had been forced to the border, to questions of peculiar relations there is no possibility of fixing.

She halted a taxi and stepped into an alien frame, racing to nowhere, with no place to come back, no terminus to the misadventure. They might have stayed forever on the eve of indetermination, intercepting flashes from infinitude, had she not let out a breath. Her other hand had accomplished work in the night, multiplying strokes and dark glass pictures.

Their position was delicate. The damp of his skin was felt by her as though incriminated. Moments of an immanent law neither of them were now to know knotted tightly about that unprecedented autumn. Its entire material density was shaped from the assignment of insides constituted within and behind the scenes, but also from the outside, from the whole field of reference on each other's lips. Lost hours during the night, the emptying ranks of chairs—it was as though they described a caution, a meditation on a form of closure. All they had left were tracings of otherness.

All the same, he woke to the apprehension of loss. It was his silent absence he looked reflectively at. Clumsily he thought this over. 'The point of view of nothing', glumly said, *sotto voce*. It might mean abandoning the endless efforts to adequately account for all sharp edges, to dam up questions within the limits of this muffled hollow. He had lost his footing in the discursive conflict. History, politics, economics, sexuality. He had to move on. He was determined to leave by the roof, the edge, the margin, down a shaft of anticipating silence. 'I was only thinking', he said with a nervy, bitten-off yawn, 'of how to integrate the material conditions with intractable theoretical difficulties.'

The clock in the distance struck. In here the lights in the mirrors rocked. The painting is hung, but for how long? With the shock of detonation, any number of outcomes. This allows us not to attend to something like it could be. But hints of it that did escape were a chapter missing from their reflections.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Anna Gibbs. Apart from the prompt, the text was composed from words and phrases taken from John Frow's 'Intertextuality and Ontology' in Michael Worton and Judith Still (eds), *Intertextuality: theories and practices*, (New York and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) and Elizabeth Bowen's novel, *In the Heat of the Day*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).