

It's moving from I to it:

A 15-month research project on
visual language, abstraction,
disappearance and the object

Outline:

Visual language describes the perception, comprehension and production of visual signs.

We read, but actually what we really do is see images. And what we see is constructed, layered, complicated by the reading itself, by us reconfiguring what it is in front of our eyes. In these terms, we are able to see what we have never seen, and we do it by recollecting images.

Consequently a fundamental aspect of our relation with an object – with both its production and perception – is based on our ability to think abstractly, to reflect through emotions and analytic methods, either consciously or unconsciously. And as soon as we do that, images are involved.

It's moving from I to it finds its first embodiment in an editable script, it fictionalizes its own mode of production in the attempt to become not simply a reflection on cultural production, but, more concretely, a collective step towards it. Being open to disparate manifestations, it aims to create a visual language as an active mediator in our understanding of the way we look, the way we might look, the way we might have been looking.

It's moving from I to it will grow exponentially along with insertions of new materials and contributions from various invited participants.

Main characters:

— The becoming subject

A quiet character – an ‘I’ turning into an ‘it’. *The becoming subject* punctuates its discourse with prolonged, unbearable moments of silence that make it impossible to keep a grasp on what was stated before or to anticipate what will follow. With a transient biography and lost origins, *The becoming subject* tries to leave a subjective trace, but she is constantly survived by language. Nothing that she owns belongs to her. The character – at least her subjectivity – ceases to exist once it emerges. She is in a constant state of restlessness, torn between her desire to stand still and the inevitable moves she undertakes to demonstrate her point. Yet once in a while she dozes fitfully. The character is never reliable; her overt generosity is undermined by her lack of consistence.

Any manifestation of her persona irremediably endangers her subjectivity, whenever she speaks (or writes), she suddenly transforms into an object. She becomes so much of a character that she turns into matter.

THE FATHER

Nowhere! It is merely to show you that one is born to life in many forms, in many shapes, as tree, or as stone, as water, as butterfly, or as woman. So one may also be born a character in a play.

THE MANAGER

(with feigned comic dismay)

So you and these other friends of yours have been born characters?

THE FATHER

Exactly, and alive as you see!

MANAGER and ACTORS burst out laughing.

So her constant effort is aimlessly conveyed in maintaining an autonomous subjectivity against the objectifying power of external elements. And yet, through

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Tuesday 26 September

~~Dear Dietrich~~

Dear Kay,

~~Do you still hear my voice, do you still hear me laughing? I'm still laughing,~~ went swimming this morning, the sea was cold and the air crisp. When I went into the water I could feel every single vein, every hair, the tips of my fingers, ... My skin felt as if it was separate from my body, every layer and element aware of its own constitution and quality. It was a sensation of consciousness and I suddenly understood, in all its complexity, the place and course of things. It appeared as an image that I knew inside out. But the sensation didn't last for long, the image faded and I couldn't reconstruct it. I gave in to the cold and I drifted with the waves east wards. My senses went numb. I was part of the water and somehow lost awareness of myself.

It made me think of ~~you~~ Dietrich von Esterhazy. ~~So maybe I'm addressing this letter to you? Maybe I even sent it to you.~~ The way we both have this memory of what life should be about. Anyhow when I was young, I could feel myself and I could see an image of myself projected in front of me. You can dream yourself and you have the ability to live that dream, to make it real. You never dreamt Dietrich, you just expected. And as life proceeds the every-day routine takes over and you surrender. The image crumbles, your senses fade and you become part of the environment. You become society. With every conversation you share and give up your own view, your thoughts become common good.

You Dietrich formed the image I'm running from. Now I don't need to run any longer. I don't need to play anymore. The image is destroyed by coming to you. You told me it is the only sincere letter you wrote, though it wasn't real. I proved that to you. You are not better than the image you make for yourself and you never made one. I idealised the letters written to me – they were for me abstract images with no corresponding bodies. I could project onto them, I could create their figure. But I wasn't able to distinguish their voice from my own.

I guess I will never send you this letter because there is no point in sharing any longer with you or with anybody else. I might change the beginning and write it to myself as if to construct my own persona or to lose myself while in the meantime, become myself.

language and speech, her 'I' is turning into 'it', she becomes an 'it', an objects in the midst of other objects. If *The becoming subject's* main goal is to achieve and maintain her subjectivity, and if any relation with other objects or other characters prevent this from happening, the only possible solution for her is to stand still, as immobile as possible. And so she does. She spends most of the time avoiding any movement or contact with anything or anyone



There is a moment in the life of a man - consequently, in the life of men- when everything is completed, the books written, the universe silent, beings at rest. There is left only the task of announcing it: this is easy. But as this supplementary word threatens to upset the equilibrium - and where to find the force to say it? Where to find another place for it? - it is not pronounced and the task remains unfinished. One writes only what I have just written, finally that is not written either.



MOMENTUM

His room in the slum.

This is perhaps naive;
distortion occurs in
the moment
as in memory;
the mind is quick
the feelings quicker;
but I want the moment
live
in its dishonesty,
minimal affectation:
correction in re-
flection.

More: constriction of
life paralyses of
vitality-
the garotte of the slum,
the garret of the mind.

Tunnel-skyline: N.Y.'s
Tight rectumtangles.

okay here we go i don't want to
whisper this i want to hear my nat
ural speaking voice the way it really
sounds also i can see myself here in
a full-length mirror as i speak there's
another mirror too so that i can't
really lose sight of myself as i sit down
on my bed or lie down or walk around
i want to say this as it comes with
out premeditation because i want to
say it before i lose it or not so much
say it as tell it tell it to myself so
i'll have it down so that i can come
back to it again and recapture it so
the speed of the tape is my form
keep talking as the tape records non
stop tuesday it wasn't merely that
i had to go up there to find a place for
us to live in the summer i had been
in a condition of somnolence stupor
perhaps more like it going to bed
late at night three or four getting
ten hours sleep waking up toward
noon or past one o'clock sometimes
and i wanted to break that i got to
the bus station no time to buy any
thing to bring along to eat just beck
ett i got on the bus only one other
passenger an old lady uneventful
through the tunnel the view of the sky
line down the turnpike through new
jersey some other city newark

else. However, when interrogated or constrained by circumstances, forced to interact – to move, to take a position – her solution is to constantly reinvent the rules of the game. If language and speech define and transform everything into a well-defined, recognizable object, *The becoming subject* fights back by persistently

reinventing terminologies, names
and expressions, in the attempt to
resist and battle against any univo-
cal defining power of language.

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THE FATHER

(irritated)

The illusion! For Heaven's sake, don't say illusion. Please don't use that word, which is particularly painful for us..

THE MANAGER

(astounded)

And why, if you please?

THE FATHER

It's painful, cruel, really cruel; and you ought to understand that.

THE MANAGER

But why? What ought we to say then? The illusion, I tell you, sir, which we've got to create for the audience...

THE FATHER

If your reality can change from one day to another...

THE MANAGER

But everyone knows it can change. It is always changing, the same as anyone else's

THE FATHER

(with a cry)

No, sir, not ours! Look here! That is the very difference! Our reality doesn't change: it can't change! It can't be other than what it is, because it is already fixed for ever. It's terrible. Ours is an immutable reality which should make you shudder when you approach us if you are really conscious of the fact that your reality is a mere transitory and fleeting illusion, taking this form today and tomorrow, according to the conditions, according to your will, your sentiments, which in turn are controlled by an intellect that shows how?... Illusions of reality represented in this fatuous comedy of life that never ends, nor can ever end! Because if tomorrow it were to end... then why, all would be finished.

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At bottom he was an enigma to himself as to everyone else. Only he was capable of scrambling codes and genders with a strange, impersonal elegance. "Mince," thin, slim, was his favorite word as "petit" or "menu" was Deleuze's (as when he declared: "I am not sick, I simply have a petite health"). He found "infra-mince" even better as a concept. He was convinced that it took us to another space, from the second to the third dimension. He, the thin man, the hunger artist, el ombre invisible. His best performances were disappearing acts. And yet he always left traces of a sort.

– The host

The host has been living at the same address for many decades.

X

3. *The falsification of mode-identifying signals.* Among human beings mode identifiers can be falsified, and we have the artificial laugh, the manipulative simulation of friendliness, the confidence trick, kidding and the like. Similar falsifications have been recorded among mammals. Among human beings we meet with a strange phenomenon – the unconscious falsification of the subject's understanding of the other person's mode-identifying signals. He may mistake shyness for contempt, etc. Indeed most of the errors of self-reference fall under his head.

The building changed, the street was paved, the infrastructure improved, the neighbours moved out, the local shop closed down, the telephone booth was vandalised, the weather is slightly warmer. Defying urban regeneration, *The host* is always there. *The host* takes breakfast, lunch and dinner at the same hours combining and strategizing good manners with good food. *The host* welcomes: relatives, relatives' friends and acquaintances, stray dogs, passer-bys, backpack travellers, couch surfers. The invitation is never persistent, yet subtly delivered. The guests are all tactfully treated and lured into a comfort zone; they are prone to extend their stay in the house with white walls and high ceilings. *The host* likes interruptions, interferences, twists and shifts, background noises and slips of tongue embracing stability as strong as disruption. *The host* collects and produces, never discards. One room of the house serves as a deposit and workshop for rubbish to be stored and re-used. Never shown or mentioned to the guests, the room is yet to be discovered.

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The guest cools the soup and warms his hands; the host invites the traveller and sends him on his way, asks him in, asks him to sit down and eat and then asks him to leave, sends him away: don't sleep here, he says. The host, the guest, breathes twice, speaks twice, speaks with forked tongue, as it were. I don't know who the passer-by is or who the satyr is. Both are the host, the guest. And from one mouth they breathe and say yes and no. The traveller, moreover, interrupts the meal of his host; the satyr, moreover, interrupts the meal of his guest. Who cooled the soup, who spoke, but who didn't eat. The two rats here look alike. I would not be at all surprised of the passer-by's overcoat hid his tail and his goat's legs. Excluded even before he parasited the satyr.

But the excluded one, just a while ago, was making his way through the countryside; the passer-by goes out again in the rain that, as far as we know, never stops, beating incessantly on the roof of the host and guest. That noise too interrupted a process: a trip. And from this noise comes the story. Hosts and parasites always in the process of passing by, being sent away, touring around, walking alone. They exchange places in a space soon to be defined.

X

DADA-this is a word that throws up ideas so that they can be shot down; every bourgeois is a little playwright, who invents different subjects and who, instead of situating suitable characters on the level of his own intelligence, like chrysalises on chairs, tries to find causes or objects (according to whichever psychoanalytic method he practises) to give weight to his plot, a talking and self-defining story.

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This uncanny collage – this ménage à deux, moins him – remains exemplary of the kind of creative crossings that can be achieved between the various arts, but also between art and life, and art and death. Becoming someone else is a way of becoming oneself, which became the condition for his own poetics of chance and politization of aesthetics. His creative anarchism.

Occasionally, *The host* enjoys swapping positions with the guests, making the roles indiscernible, shifting subjectivities. *The host* does not host, but absorbs. Inevitably, the physical proximity with the guests becomes internalized. The guests harbour resistance, but caught in a moment of vulnerability they withdraw and comply. Their resistance turns into complicity, their search for stability is undermined by *The host's* need to embody other subjectivities. *The host* needs the guest as much as the guest needs *The host*, they define each other through one other. Mysteriously enough, all the previous guests failed to predict that moment when the hospitality of their host turns into an irreversible hostility.



The great cloud which hung, not only over London, but over the whole British Isles on the first day of the day of the nineteenth century stayed, or rather, did not stay, for it was buffeted about constantly by blustering gales, long enough to have extraordinary consequences upon those who lived beneath its shadow. A change seemed to have come over the climate of England. Rain fell frequently, but only in fitful gusts, which were no sooner over than they began again. The sun shone, of course, but it was so girt about with clouds and the air was so saturated with water, that its beams were discoloured and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort took the place of the more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century. Under this bruised and sullen canopy the green of the cabbages was less intense, and the white of the snow was muddied. But what was worse, damp now began to make its way into every house - damp, which is the most insidious of all enemies, for while the sun can be shut out by blinds, and the frost roasted by a hot fire, damp steals in while we sleep; damp is silent, imperceptible, ubiquitous. Damp swells the wood, furs the kettle, rusts the iron, rots the stone. So gradual is the process, that it is not until we pick up some chest of drawers, or coal scuttle, and the whole thing drops to pieces in our hands, that we suspect even that the disease is at work.

Thus, stealthily and imperceptibly, none marking the exact day or hour of the change, the constitution of England was altered and nobody knew it. Everywhere the effects were felt. The hardy country gentleman, who had sat down gladly to a meal of ale and beef in a room designed, perhaps by the brothers Adam, with classic dignity, now felt chilly. Rugs appeared; beards were grown; trousers were fastened tight under the instep. The chill which he felt in his legs the country gentleman soon transferred to his house; furniture was muffled; walls and tables were covered; nothing was left bare. Then a change became essential.

– The portable object

Defined by all that is movable, nomadic, and produced through disappearance, subject to withdrawal by its own producer, or at least of his/her codified rules – and yet constructed so as to stay, to exist as an object, to be visible, interpretable, sharable and irremediably changeable.



Cadou was fifteen years old when his parents invited Witold Gombrowicz to their house for dinner. It was only a few months (this was at the end of April 1963) since the Polish writer had embarked from Buenos Aires for the last time and, having paid a lightning visit to Barcelona, had come to Paris, where, among many other things, he had accepted the invitation to dine with the Cadous, old friends of his from the fifties in Buenos Aires.

The young Cadou had aspirations to be a writer. In fact he had already dedicated months to preparing for it. At his tender age, he was reasonably familiar with Gombrowicz's work, which had impressed him a great deal and which led him sometimes to recite whole paragraphs from the Polish writer's novels in front of his parents. And so the parents' satisfaction at inviting Gombrowicz to dinner was twofold.

But something very unexpected occurred. The young Cadou was so awestruck on seeing Gombrowicz within the four walls of his parents' home that he hardly said a word all evening and ended up – something similar had befallen the young Marboeuf when he saw Flaubert in his parents' home – feeling literally like a piece of furniture in the drawing room where they had dinner.

As a result of this domestic metamorphosis, the young Cadou saw how his aspirations to become a writer were permanently rescinded.

Unlike Marboeuf, Cadou did not merely see himself as a piece of furniture all his brief life, but at

least he painted. And of course he painted furniture. It was his way of slowly forgetting that he had once wanted to write.

All his paintings centred exclusively on a piece of furniture and they all bore the same enigmatic and repetitive titles *Self-Portrait*.

"The thing is, I feel like a piece of furniture, and pieces of furniture, to the best of my knowledge, don't write." Cadou would say in his defence when reminded that as a boy he had wanted to be a writer.

There is an interesting study of Cadou's case in which sarcastic emphasis is placed on what happened in 1972, when poor Cadou died after a long and painful illness. His relatives unwittingly buried him as if he were a piece of furniture, they got rid of him like some surplus furniture, and buried him in a niche near the *Marché aux Puces* in Paris, that market where so many old pieces of furniture are to be found.

Knowing that he was going to die, the young Cadou wrote a short epitaph for his tomb, which he asked his family to accept as his "complete works". An ironic request. The epitaph for his tomb, which he asked his family to accept as his "complete works". An ironic request. The epitaph reads as follows: "I tried in vain to be other pieces of furniture, but even that was denied me. So I have been a single piece of furniture my whole life, which is, after all, no mean achievement when one considers that the rest is silence."

The portable object escapes possession; it belongs to all, yet to nobody. *The portable object* is a peaceful and relaxed character, feeling at ease with its choices and removing any self-doubts. *The portable object* never resigns or resists, but diligently fulfils its objectives. *The portable object* gains everyone's sympathy through its assumed simplicity and mild disposition; the object is never problematic, never interrogative. The object reacts the same



Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end. You make a model of a building as you may of a corpse, and your model may have the shell of the old walls within it as your cast might have the skeleton, with what advantage I neither see nor care: but the old building is destroyed, and that more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust, or melted into a mass of clay: more has been gleaned out of desolated Nineveh than ever will be out of rebuilt Milan.

way irrespective of a situation. *The portable object* is overtly sincere and sociable, however it establishes its relationships on a strict contractual basis. *The portable object* writes and signs contracts with anyone it comes into contact with.

Co✓

ON THE FIFTH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 1718, which to the era fixed on, was as near nine calendar months as any husband could in reason have expected, - was I, Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, brought forth into this scurvy and disastrous world of ours. - I wish I had been born in the Moon, or in any of the planets (except Jupiter or Saturn, because I never could bear cold weather), for it could not well have fared worse with me in any of them (though I will not answer for Venus) than it has in this vile, dirty planet of ours, - which, o' my conscience, with revence be it spoken, I take to be made up of the shreds and clippings of the rest; - but the planet is well enough, provided a man could be born in it to a great title or to a great estate; or could anyhow contrive to be called up to public charges, and employments of dignity or power, but that is not my case; - and therefore every man will speak of the fair as this own market has gone in it; - for which cause I affirm it over again to be one of the vilest worlds that ever was made; - for I can truly say, that from the first hour I drew my breath in it, to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all, for an asthma I got in skating against the wind in Flanders, - I have been the continual sport of what the world made me feel the weight of any great or signal evil; - yet with all the good temper in the world, I affirm it of her, that in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small Hero sustained.

All these contracts are collected and stored, accompanying *The portable object* in its frequent journeys.

– A tiger

The tiger is like a background noise that reminds the characters of their intrinsic limits, driving them out of reflection, crisis or a particularly strong emotional state. At the same time *The tiger* produces distance between them, as it is always perceived by everyone, but independently, so that each single character would think they are the only witness of it. In this sense *The tiger* is real but always somehow subjective. Nobody will openly talk about it, even if they will all look for it.



A tiger comes to mind. The twilight here
Exalts the vast and busy Library
And seems to set the bookshelves back in gloom;
Innocent, ruthless, bloodstained, sleek
It wanders through its forest and its day
Printing a track along the muddy banks
Of sluggish streams whose names it does not know
(In its world there are no names or past
Or time to come, only the vivid now)
And makes its way across wild distances
Sniffing the braided labyrinth of smells
And in the wind picking the smell of dawn
And tantalizing scent of grazing deer;
Among the bamboo's slanting stripes I glimpse
The tiger's stripes and sense the bony frame
Under the splendid, quivering cover of skin.
Curving oceans and the planet's wastes keep us
Apart in vain; from here in a house far off
In South America I dream of you,
Track you, O tiger of the Ganges' banks.

It strikes me now as evening fills my soul
That the tiger addressed in my poem
Is a shadowy beast, a tiger of symbols
And scraps picked up at random out of books,
A string of labored tropes that have no life,
And not the fated tiger, the deadly jewel
That under sun or stars or changing moon
Goes on in Bengal or Sumatra fulfilling
Its rounds of love and indolence and death.
To the tiger of symbols I hold opposed
The one that's real, the one whose blood runs hot
As it cuts down a herd of buffaloes,
And that today, this August third, nineteen
Fifty-nine, throws its shadow on the grass;
But by the act of giving it a name,
By trying to fix the limits of its world,
It becomes a fiction not a living beast,
Not a tiger out roaming the wilds of earth.

We'll hunt for a third tiger now, but like
The others this one too will be a form
Of what I dream, a structure of words, and not
The flesh and one tiger that beyond all myths
Paces the earth. I know these things quite well,
Yet nonetheless some force keeps driving me
In this vague, unreasonable, and ancient quest,
And I go on pursuing through the hours
Another tiger, the beast not found in verse



2. *Humour*. This seems to be a method of exploring the implicit themes in thought or in a relationship. The method of exploration involves the use of messages which are characterized by a condensation of Logical Types or communicational modes. A discovery, for example, occurs when it suddenly becomes plain that a message was not only metaphoric but also more literal, or vice versa. That is to say, the explosive moment in humour is the moment when the labelling of the mode undergoes a dissolution and resynthesis. Commonly, the punch line compels a re-evaluation of earlier of earlier signals which ascribed to certain messages a particular mode (e.g., literalness or fantasy). This has the peculiar effect of attributing *mode* to those signals which had previously the status of that higher Logical Type which classifies the modes.

The tiger defeats expectations:
although the characters are convinced they could obtain what they aim at, *The tiger* brings them back

to their starting position. At the same time, it could exist as a moment of illumination, a passing instant of clarification that lasts for the duration of its brief visit. *The tiger* can talk, but it only talks as interior voice. As a consequence, each character is convinced that they own it, that they have captured it. *The tiger* motivates one's endeavors, yet it condemns one to a life of obsession. As much as it triggers admiration, it causes distress. *The tiger* keeps the wheel spinning. Everyone is looking for *The tiger*, but when it turns up, they all fail to see it, as the image in their mind does not correspond to the referent. *The tiger* is there when one least expects. Its appearance produces a moment of interruption, which, though fugitive, gives rise to a new state of things. The existence of *The tiger* is yet to be confirmed.

☞X

5 The first lesson, given to me by a blind
 Our first memories are visual ones. In memory life becomes a silent film. We all have in our minds an image which is the first, or one of the first, in our lives. That image is a sign, or to be exact, a linguistic sign. So if it is a linguistic sign it communicates or expresses something. I shall give you an example, Gennariello, which to you as as Neapolitan may sound exotic. The first image of my life is a white, transparent blind, which hangs-without moving, I believe-from a window which looks out on to a somewhat sad and dark lane. That blind terrifies me and fills me with anguish: not as something threatening and unpleasant but as something cosmic.

☞X

Take that arrow, for instance. That evening it was no more important than Leo's game of chess, the newspaper or my cup of tea; everything happened at the same level, combined into a kind of concert, like the buzzing of a swarm of bees. But now I know in retrospect that the most important thing that evening was the arrow, so I am giving it a prominent place in the story, shaping the future out of mass of undifferentiated facts.

– The stranger

Interrogated about all possible matters (about the subject, the object, its perception and production) *The stranger* simply can't guarantee a single word: "I don't know...I wasn't there... No..."



5. According to our hypothesis, the term 'ego function' (as this term is used when a schizophrenic is described as having 'weak ego function') is precisely the process of discriminating communicational modes either within the self or between the self and others. The schizophrenic exhibits weakness in three areas of such function: (a) He has difficulty in assigning the correct communicational mode to the messages he receives from other persons. (b) He has difficulty in assigning the correct communicational mode to those messages which he himself utters or emits non-verbally. (c) He has difficulty in assigning the correct communicational mode to his own thoughts, sensations and percepts.

In most cases, *The stranger* is misunderstood, mistreated and dismissed. What is a sign of introversion is taken as apathy, what is sincere detachment is taken as open affront. *The stranger's* lack of concern turns into the concern of the others.



"Bartleby! quick, I am waiting."

I hear a slow scrape of his chair legs on the uncarpeted floor, and soon he appeared standing at the entrance of his hermitage.

"What is wanted?" said he mildly.

"The copies, the copies" said I hurriedly. "We are going to examine them. There" - and I held towards him the fourth quadruplicate.

"I would prefer not to."

With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but in a wonderful manner, touched and disconcerted me. I began to reason with him.

The same stranger who avoids eye contact in face-to-face interactions is constantly put into the spotlight and questioned with a greedy curiosity. *The stranger* is reserved and embraces his state of latency. *The stranger* never gets distracted, still he never pays attention. Under the pressure of conveying thoughts, expressing opinions, answering questions, *The stranger* chooses to



II

As I am telling this story in retrospect I cannot tell it as it really happened. Take that arrow, for instance. That evening it was no more important than Leo's game of chess, the newspaper or my cup of tea; everything happened at the same level, combined into a kind of concert, like the buzzing of a swarm of bees. But now I know in retrospect that the most important thing that evening was the arrow, so I am giving it a prominent place in the story, shaping the future out of mass of undifferentiated facts.

But how can one avoid telling a story *ex post facto*? Can nothing ever be described as it really was, reconstituted in its anonymous actuality? Will no one ever be able to reproduce the incoherence of the living moment at its moment of birth? Born as we are out of chaos, why can we never establish contact with it? No sooner do we look at it than order, pattern, shape is born under our eyes. Never mind. Let it pass. Every morning Katasia brought me my breakfast in bed, and the first thing I saw when I woke was that disfigurement over my head, that darting, gliding movement superimposed on her honest, rustic, blue-eyed face. Could she not have stayed in that position for a quarter of a second less? Did she not spend a fraction of second too long bending over me? Perhaps she did or perhaps she did not. I could not be sure, but the possibility penetrated inside me together with the memory of my nocturnal imaginings about her. On the other hand, might she not stay leaning over me like that for perfectly innocent reasons? I had great difficulty in seeing anything clearly. Only things can be properly seen; there are far more obstacles in the way of seeing persons. At all events, that early morning scene in which I lay in bed with her mouth right over me engraved itself daily on my mind and stayed with me all day long, thus keeping alive the obsession with her mouth to which I clung so tenaciously.



CURTAIN

SCENE 2

The letter projected on the screen is written in a sharp, precise, cultured handwriting:

Dear Miss Gonda,

I have had everything men ask of life. I have seen it all, and I feel as if I were leaving a third-rate show on a disreputable side street. If I do not bother to die, it is only because my life has all the emptiness of the grave and my death would have no change to offer me. It may happen, any day now, and nobody-not even the one writing these lines-will know the difference.

But before it happens, I want to raise what is left of my soul in a last salute to you, you who are that which the world should have been. Moritori te salutamus.

Dietrich von Esterhazy

Beverly-Sunset Hotel

Beverly Hills, California

remain opinion-less and bravely resist the temptation of idle talk. He is an audience pressured to say something, anything. He becomes a subject of other subjects: others will write the line for him and they will project their own ideas on top of him (somehow *The stranger* is never there). The other characters are interested in the idea of a stranger, but not in what he has to say or his opinion. Since there is no continuity in his opinions, *The stranger* never develops a system of thought.



Act I Scene I

The drawing room of the Chamberlaynes' London flat. Early evening. Edward Chamberlayne, Julia Shuttlethwaite, Celia Coplestone, Peter Quilpe, Alexandre MacCologie and an Unidentified Guest.

ALEX

You are missing the point completely Julia. There were NO tigers. That's the point.

JULIA

Then what were you doing, up in a tree, you and the Maharaja?

ALEX

My dear Julia! It is perfectly hopeless. You haven't been listening.

PETER

You will have to tell us all over again, Alex.

ALEX

I never tell the same story twice.

JULIA

But I'm still waiting to know what happened. I know it started as a story about tigers.

ALEX

I said there were no tigers.

CELIA

Oh do stop wrangling. Both of you. It's your turn, Julia. Do tell us that story you told us the other day, about Lady Kloutz and the wedding cake.

PETER

And how the butler found her in the pantry, rinsing her mouth out with champagne. I like that story.

CELIA

I love that story.

ALEX

I'm never tired to listen to that story.

JULIA

Well, you all seem to know it.

CELIA

But we are never tired of hearing you tell it. I don't believe everyone here knows it.

(To the Unidentified Guest)

You don't know it, do you?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST

No, I've never heard it.

Locations:

– A container

The container is that place into which everyone projects his or her own ideas. The container is shaped by the characters and defined by the time of someone.

– An environment with bad smell

It is a location defined by a strong scent that triggers memories. Although it is a communal space, it leads to personal experiences. In this location two timings conflate: the time of someone and the time of everyone.

– A public square

It is an open space where characters meet randomly, gather or hang out. It is a space of transition that marks the passage from one situation to another. The public square is a magnet around which the characters gravitate. It is a site inscribed with narratives (rumors, gossips, chit chat stories). The characters are inclined to always go back there. The square is easily replaceable. In their peregrinations, the characters always encounter the public square.

The square has a library, a butcher, a bakery, sometimes a gift shop and a market on Tuesdays.

– The library

It shapes the characters and it is informed by them. It informs the locations, the props and times. It is a collection of materials with potential to produce new meanings and articulations. It is inexhaustible. The library is there to clarify any misunderstandings and misreadings, though constant new

confusions and questions emerge in the research. In the library there are various departments. Amongst others, there are the departments of books, images, films and plays.

Time:

– The time of someone

– The time of everyone

The library

- ∞
Pieternel Vermoortel as ‘Kay Gonda’, in response to the fan letter in *Ideal* by Ayn Rand, 2010
- Luigi Pirandello, *Six characters in search of an author*, 1921
- ✓
Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite conversation*, 1996
- ✓
Ronald Sukenick, ‘Momentum’ in *The Death of the Novel and Other Stories*, 1969
- ✗
Luigi Pirandello, *Six characters in search of an author*, 1921
- ✗
Becoming Duchamp, Sylvère Lotringer, 1998
- ✗
Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972
- ✗
Tristan Tzara, *Dada manifesto*, 1918
- ⊕
Michael Serres, *Parasite*, 1980
- ∞
Sylvère Lotringer, *Becoming Duchamp*, 1998
- ∞
Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, 1928
- ∞•
Enrique Vila-Matas, *Bartleby & Co*, 2004
- ∞✓
The Seven Lamps of Architecture, J. Ruskin, 1849
- ∞✓
Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 1759
- ∞✗
Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The Other Tiger’ in *Rosa y Azul*, 1977
- ∞✗
Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972
- ∞✗
Pasolini, *Lutheran Letters*, 1983
- ∞✗
Witold Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, 1965
- ∞⊕
Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972
- Herman Melville, *Bartleby the scrivener*, 2002
- ∞
Witold Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, 1965
- T.S. Elliot, *The Cocktail Party*, 1949
- ✓
Ayn Rand, *Ideal*, 1934