

strangeness, | magic, writing

ANNE BREWSTER

house/window

the house with the light burns all night. it seems to be empty: she never hears or sees anyone coming in or out of the door. she never sees anyone through the window—not even a flicker of movement. but every night the light is on and it stays on. the curtain is drawn so she has no idea of the occupants. but one day she notices that the blinds are up and the window open. she is looking onto a large bed with bright red cushions. that is the first and last she sees of the room. she hears months later that the husband had died. had this been the day, she wonders, when the room had momentarily opened out onto the world, when it had suddenly acquired dimension and the outline of narrative? when the bed, emblem of conjugal life, had suddenly become an immense reservoir of emptiness, of surplus or suspended happiness, and of intricate detail—layers of linen, stitched quilt, damask bedspread and embroidered cushions—all plumped up, airy and light with memory, floating and lifted then settled again; folded, unfolded and refolded every day, lovingly, bitterly, ineluctably. just as now she is folded into that room, watching from the window to glimpse, momentarily, the bright elaboration of the illuminated interior.

it is as if the relations of the outside[,] folded back to create a doubling, allow a relation to oneself to emerge, and constitute an inside.

deleuze

absence/writing

you have gone. your absence wakes me. writing wakes me. brings me to myself. an 'i' is created in the act of wanting to touch you. writing touches another body, but lightly. the marks on the page are only strokes, marking where i have been. they do not solidify the other, although you are present. i brush against that presence, palpating it; it is the warmth in my chest, the sparks down my arms, the galvanising of my hand, the precise pulse. for a moment, feeling and action flow and something else is created: a sound, heat, a mark. this is the space where i moved out of myself to meet you. perhaps you were or will be here, perhaps not. it is of no consequence. but when i fall back into myself i fold you back with me, touched lightly, felt. this is the space of connective tissue, the membrane of the self, the seam along which the self is exposed. the sentence is a scar, the line along which the self is opened out and, brushing the other, folded back on itself.

breathless

the black night is as dense as distance but as i sit here i know you will be sitting under the same moon, and even if it is a later moon it will still be burning and everything is possible. the black air is saturated with dream. the body is a sieve through which the world flows and i am electric. every phone, every plane, every radio, every email, every satellite, every thought, every breath, every memory, every smile, every word, every hair, every blink, every pulse, every turn away, every turn towards, every moment observed in secret, every gaze held, every downward glance, every small return of tenderness, every awkward silence, every angry frown, every ribbon of laughter, every exuberant

expulsion of breath, every pause of contentment, every fearful shrug, every warm flood of relief, every sob, every sharp lift of the shoulders, every word that coils and recoils, surges, entwines, twists, pulls and turns me round and round you, brings me back here to you where you will always be with me in me and out of me far away very far away but also here making me alive again.

perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be with its rifts, crevices, as indigent and distorted ... to gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects—this alone is the task of thought.

adorno

stones

the way stones on the beach are so different to one another. their small particularities—their curves, their mottled shades which become more complex the longer you look. their indefinite forms which assume the outline of a boomerang, a coin in your hand. their smooth, buffed feel as soft as skin. the way they breathe under your touch like skin. the way they are translucent and firm, solid and light, dense and indeterminate. a stone is a bubble, water standing very still, thinking wound round on itself, a wish biding its time, something you can only guess at.

traffic

there's something vaguely comforting about traffic. you're in the stream of life rather than at either the point of departure or arrival, which are, after all, only incidental. one part of your mind is on the radio, the tender wail of new orleans zydeco and the chatty, ruminative voice of the disc jockey, the other on the cars around you and their attentive yet day-dreaming occupants who drum their fingers along the door of their cars, glance at the trees dipping in the wind, the pigeons

gliding between houses, a girl struggling with a large eager black dog on a lead. all the while the drivers' attentions are knitted together, pulling along ahead of them—one road, one movement, one purpose—in the middle of conversations, of plans, of exchange; in the middle of a song, an argument in the car next to you, a scene where a couple meet and embrace on the footpath; in the middle of the day where the late afternoon sun slices the terrace houses perfectly across the diagonal; in the middle of friday where your thoughts constantly pick up speed, then switch, pause and float; in the middle of your life, wanting more and giving up what you are. you are both captured and dispersed in the long winding rifts of the zydeco, the micro-families engaged in their micro-narratives, the suburb with its branching streets and shops at intersections. you are both connected and disconnected, caught up and released, wandering. you are outside and inside, astride and adrift. the wisdom of plants, the rhizome something else; entirely oriented and detachable. includes forgetting, this kind of nervous, temporal and collective. traffic, starting anywhere, neither beginning nor end, banks and picks up speed in the middle.

a transformative relationship between stone, human body and animal is set up which is flickering in perception.

muecke

stronger extra strong/the exact change

the house has no inside. flashing lights, shopfronts, motorists, pedestrians and cathedral spires inhabit every room, bright and soft. i sidestep the traffic at every turn. on the table the '*stronger extra strong mints*'. i am a sequence of gestures: i move my hand across the page, i pick up my bags. there will always be too much and not enough to say. we are coming and going and there will always be room for extra. the house spills everything—light, bodies—into each other. it is too much. walking down a street is like thinking of a song. it's always there but absent. we are a series of repetitions, opening and closing. the city

is a muscle; i am stretched, squeezed. i forget and in the same instant i remember. this is the way i live. i used to think i could stop and start, but stopping and starting go on for a long time and when does one become the other? i had the exact change for the taxi. the bright coincidental details in the world of things; not metaphors but exchanges. these sentences, like the weather and the world of things, unwind me. i have no inside: there is only rain and i am leaking, through and through.

[in] the ... discovery of our intrinsic difference let us know ourselves as unconscious, altered, other, in order to better approach the universal otherness of the strangers that we are—for only strangeness is universal.

kristeva

strangeness

strangeness removes all guarantees: it dispatches with immortality, affect and memory. strangeness is cosmic and intellectual. strangeness is expansive, timeless and cool. strangeness is the intervention of language, but it is not talking. it is the conversation you have with yourself. it is the story of the thinking self and its estrangement. strangeness is the evanescence of solidity. strangeness is severance, recognition. strangeness is the disappearance of home, the reappearance of the haunted self.

in the middle of the story

in the middle of the night, time seems to stop and you're marooned. into this beguiling hiatus, one could inveigle any history. how to invite continuance, movement, to this stalled moment? to start again to keep going, inevitably to admit the impossibility of ending, which is, after all, only the pause between events. even this story must go on,

eventually, and not necessarily tirelessly. there is more to come, nudging the newly opened space, neither wholly predictable nor unpredictable. you are at once reluctant, compelled: for a moment you've imagined narrativelessness, inoperable freedom. then the cat steps onto the bed, brushing the surface of your attention and you are in the world again; alive for one more day.

the recursive time of the performative ...

bhabha

the past/writing

in a deep sleep. in a kind of paralysis. in a dream. her head slipped under the water but she kept on dreaming. she didn't need oxygen. dreaming was enough. time passed her by. she was hanging. she knew, but not for certain. language was a ritual, obsessive in its detail and repetition. there was never enough. it was not reducible to its content. it was a style of living. it was a form of connection, virtual but passionate: words touched, things happened. she travelled the city on foot. it was a way of finding her bearings, of piecing together a map—heard, seen, felt. occasionally she would speak to her loved ones and those she feared. there was water everywhere. at night mesmerising lights played on the surface. hong kong could be sydney, which could be perth or singapore. the metropolitan combination of light and water was the same. she was in a trance. she was talking to herself, anticipating that someone would overhear. it was science fiction, living in a capsule. it was strange but utterly mundane. she read on the bus: he taught her about magic although she had never met him. things came together as she sat up late, writing, but they remained separate too and essentially ungovernable. one didn't cause the other like they do in stories or the movies. it was just that she strung them together on the line, trying to domesticate sorrow, to rein it in. but the lines kept floating off. she found it hard to relinquish the fear of not being able to maintain the line moving out ahead of her; on either side, abandonment, regret.

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Note: 'in the middle of the story' appeared first in 'ProseThetic Memories', Anne Brewster and Hazel Smith, *Memory Writing*, special issue of *Salt*, vol. 16, 2002, pp. 199–211.

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