

I

A text beginning like this

or

the beginning of this text which will bring about the revelation of several attitudes which happen to have been noticed in the past few hours.

Routes to be followed.

Which draw away from certain observation points, which are in no way essential to the arrangement of spaces between which two three and more women and men come to life from without or within become characters, which is to say the usual setting.

The text and several variables.

These few days past women and men touching one another in the crowd inevitably were observed and their participation sought.

The text and the spaces.

Because if O.R. and Dominique have lived together for five years their existence depends principally on those empty times during which they have been busy just being. They love each other: each being able to live without the other.

They emerge in the midst of recorded space and their present and future attitudes cannot be presumed.

Is it plan or challenge? No matter, since the words come one by one to claim their place at the centre of this narrative, and since there is no need for successes or failures to be indicated, any more than there is for the voice of desire to be heard in the variables and the spaces. O.R. and Dominique have little to say to anyone else. And to each other. ... when the words outstrip reality, and even fiction, it is time for them to be silenced.

The words revolve around the variables, namely: is a description or general narration enough to produce anything more than something else, another pale thing. The variables taken as persons. Variables in the crowd, persons in the crowd and life comes to life, but no one knows it.

Thus when you get over thinking about its five letters the crowd becomes this soft silly thing that hints of pleasure and other sorts of thrills, a vague and indefinite place to which the eye and heart are drawn as easily as to a strange body lying in the shadows, a good spot for arranging a rendezvous. Thus the point of meeting is both the entire crowd and this flashing light at the intersection of hundreds of variables.

Between O.R. and Dominique plus three others there is a tacit agreement: to remain available and not to depend on anyone. O.R. in the crowd hardly stands out among the variables. O.R.: to be able to reply with unusual gestures to the words of others. O.R., happy and strong in her flesh.

Variable.

Between eight and nine o'clock while the three others are waiting, O.R. and Dominique are moving calmly along the warm pavement of Saint-Hubert Street. Mixed with the crowd, with the others, the same as the others, they await the moment of meeting. Soon they are the meeting.

In the text.

O.R. and Dominique follow along their way, their route under the same kind of lighting that allows the words to shine out and be restored one by one, precisely, imprecisely, according to the obscure laws of chance.

The three others resemble them. They too are this meeting. Five meeting points. Dominique: to desire nothing, but to understand. The three others unanimous. O.R. silent.

Any other variable would only be a matter of words. A matter of words that has been lived, which takes form from nothing, from little, from two or three words and which finally takes over the space completely, in the book as elsewhere. From the page to the book time builds up its banalities, leaving little space for attempts at seduction.

O.R. can only be continually revived and regilded. Like her coat of arms, which the words greet with pleasure between two dull periods. From one variable to another, the narrative is there only as an intermediary, used by the force of things – all of which remain to be described when it comes to putting them to the test. It is the same with O.R. and her relations with the others. Each of them always requires an intermediary.

O.R. attentive, Dominique too. The doors of the restaurant are closed. It is day. The others left at dawn.

It is day. The crowd takes some time to reappear. Sun. It is sunny. Exhausted, O.R. walks slowly beside Dominique who steers her toward the métro. Dominique: words and days look alike ... when they are added up ... with their effectiveness subtracted ... they let you stop for a while if you want.

Later.

O.R. stretched out on the bed, half asleep. Dominique in front of her, an absent look on his face.

Not much to write about O.R. and Dominique after lovemaking. Rather a few notes in the margin of their sleep.

Parenthesis

while the text continues and clarifies its emergence as event.

Parenthesis in the core of each of the characters.

Several things are expressed this way: are thus written in the margin. And essential as they are, they interest no one. The marginal notes are invaluable. Invaluable in the same way as those characters of whom little is said and who, by the simple fact of their existence, pollute or purify, ratify the air that is breathed by the others, by the ones who are named and narrated for the unacknowledged purpose of making plausible what looks like fact in the marginal notes.

O.R., at five o'clock in the afternoon, with a cup of tea. Her hands around it. Attentive. Naked. Crushing heat.

Description: perhaps, but O.R. would not emerge from it alive. Dead rather (like something else).

From all appearances, O.R. resembles the others. But how?

O.R. sitting on the balcony, nude. For a few minutes only, because of the passersby who look up and frown.

Others too who greet her, waving with their index and middle fingers in the shape of a V. More and more variables gather under the balcony. Multicoloured variables, and soon some blue ones. Words no longer have the same meaning. O.R. has nothing to say, and Dominique is doing the talking. A conversation between the deaf. Still, they leave them alone. It is too hot to arrest anyone.

Variable.

The five o'clock crowd and this woman sitting naked on a balcony. Too pretty, ugly, vulgar, whorish. Strangely the words accumulate but do little more than accumulate.

O.R. is already into another space. Dominique knows it.

Dominique: outside of us? O.R.: no one. On a green plot of ground named Mount Royal – naming the surroundings before silencing them and belonging to them. Living here at the very moment when things are becoming intimate and an unknown joy is being born in the silence. Untellable tomorrow – in the sun, O.R. and Dominique, stretched out. Their eyes closed as if with pleasure. Eyelids fluttering because there is the pleasure of being there and waiting for nothing.

Unmoving, seen this way by Mathieu who is watching them from a distance, staring at them, unmoving.

Time precious and inexplicable, a note in the margin.

The end of one stage: starting the cycle of words again. If everything were to be said again, identical, the following pages would have no other existence than in their white surfaces. But the cycle is not a perfect repetition in that it allows for several variables, variables which always suggest the possibility of total renewal. And so O.R. and Dominique got up early this morning.

II

Reading O.R. is the same as reading Dominique and Mathieu because all three play identical roles in the book as routine machines of awareness. Reading (not facts and actions, but) O.R., Dominique and Mathieu must be seen as an essentially entertaining process: the eye reacts to the most minute stimuli NOTICE noticed *awakening* Joy something like that but even more so in the continuity of the writing.

Reading: or sorting out the black mass of words, reading as though you were writing another's words as they appear and move through your vision.

O.R., sitting on the floor, cross-legged, with a book on her lap. A book she is not reading. But which she is touching. Dominique and Mathieu, face to face, bend over an impromptu game of go, each anxious to manoeuvre himself into the winning space.

O.R. and Mathieu seen together for the first time by Dominique, who is touched. Sheets, bed and bedroom as space and surface, as description. Actions performed and being performed, nothing that could be written without being *insignificant*. Dominique's head leaning on O.R.'s shoulder. Mathieu's head on her lap: a triangle formed in silence and tenderness.

The words always follow each other quite closely. It is easy to see them and read them, but the eye is quickly clouded by the desire to know even before the eyes have read, to have read without reading, to read before and after. Before through the memory and after through speculation. Thus it is rarely at the right time that the eye does the reading it is supposed to do.

Between the lines and the words

the spaces reveal as much as the text. If not more, if not the essence. Each line distracts because it evokes an other place that is attractive, but generally harmful because alien to what really matters (?). This elsewhere, this distraction, has been created by O.R., Dominique and Mathieu. Not because they exist but because someone is telling about them and others are there to build them up or tear them down.

This somewhere else is made that much more interesting by mystery, violence and strangeness, which have proven to be sure weapons against boredom.

A TROUBLED ATMOSPHERE

O.R. had made this move in order to thwart Dominique. She knew that sooner or later he would come begging her to get rid of Mathieu. Only she could make the ultimate move that would set them both free, though not for the same reasons.

Dominique had come back. Strange, his face ashen he sat down in the red armchair in the livingroom. O.R. came over to him and provocatively asked the one question he was waiting for but which never should have been asked.

OR ANOTHER WHICH READS THUS:

Dominique would go to meet O.R. at the agreed time. He would pretend to flirt with all the girls so that after a few minutes of this little game, she would leave the discotheque and of course bump right into Mathieu who, after a few minutes' discussion, would see her home. Thus if everything went according to plan, Mathieu would never ask for even a cent back from Dominique who, having thus paid off his debt so easily, could at last leave the country and go start a new life somewhere else.

Dominique, stretched out on the balcony with a glass of beer in his hand, O.R., inside, clipping her toenails. Street noises, especially trucks at this time of the morning. Dominique: get up and go give O.R. a kiss on the neck. O.R.: goddamned toenails.

The event is seen from a distance and out of context. All that is happening is this reading being done, the only real thing, causing a few muscles to move imperceptibly and making one conscious of his own breathing.

The present tense is everything that gathers together spontaneously and lives without any intermediary. In direct relation. The immediate. Like those characters whose only role is to be attentive and present.

In a text in the present the synthesis is done by itself, for nothing can adequately maintain a description of what the eye sees, the hand touches, or the flesh desires and dreams of.

The present, when it monopolizes the whole body, abolishes the past and never allows the future to encroach upon its time.

O.R. in the streaming water of the shower, squirming happily.

Mathieu alone, in a Snack Bar at midnight, sitting on a stool, his head turned toward the waitress. Heat. Sweat rolling down most of his body. The waitress barely moving. The radio, music. Then an extraordinary boom about five hundred feet from the restaurant. Dead silence. Sirens. People rushing up. Mathieu can't keep from smiling. Rumours are flying. Dominique at the exit of a cinema, in the neon light, holding a bus ticket in his teeth. O.R. out with Dominique C. in an English part of the city. The night goes on and on.

The others are seen in the distance, damp, crushed by the heat and by sleep.

The present discontinuous as soon as the variables appear.

Something else tonight as well.

O.R. and the evening's shared places and scenes.

O.R. breaking free of the happy bonds of the present. Thinking of other things. Of the meetings in Hampstead, in the stronghold of Judge Magnate, O.R. restless, aggressive, helpless. Words and situation: *Yes or no*. The text versus the temptation to tell it all. O.R. upset because all evening it has been a question of others through herself. Because she is part of a group that is perishing, slowly, on their backs with their legs apart. O.R. and Dominique C. sharing their revolt. Which is subsiding. Blending gently into the caresses of two women, shared with the tips of their fingers, their tongues.

The experience of words, of the discontinuous, is inevitable. Now and then the variables are intriguing, enough to distract any character and make him renew contact with the past, or to involve him in the future.

Yes or no. Better dead than ... (to be filled in).

And so O.R. and Dominique got up early this morning. A bit sad, but present and available.

The words hesitate before undertaking the rest, the next page. Another page on which they will reproduce, are already reproducing their story, of how they came to be.

Superfluous words: always in one's mind but impossible to write down in a sure, appropriate place. Superfluous words assembled in the margins. Characters who are in the text, but who remain backstage. Who are there as a pretext for the text to continue with no other goal than to keep telling of its genesis as life gradually takes form. Strange but plausible narration.

O.R., sitting at her work table, writing an open letter to the newspapers. On the topic of open letters. A form of literary participation in community life. O.R., bunched over the white paper, page, soon letter. A gratifying gesture: to write. O.R. visibly Dominique's target as he leans towards her. At the very moment she finishes and signs her letter.

A discontinuous text like the discontinuous life of thoughts and actions. A style of life and expression in which one rarely comes to the point. A mechanism that doesn't leave much time for understanding the spaces, voids, empty times, all of which are revealing. And so O.R. and the others have been described at arbitrary moments, here and there when the words trade their letters for images.

O.R., Dominique and Mathieu are watching, hands full of popcorn, like modern seers. In the dark, the cinema half empty, half full. Atmosphere. On the screen, the others take on colour.

On the C.s' back lawn, Dominique stretched out on the grass between O.R. and Dominique C. About eight o'clock in the evening. All three are very calm. More than simple relaxation in their vegetal tranquility: a condition. Flush with the soil, the three of them lying with the earth against their backs. Eyelids closed.

Perhaps also.

O.R. and Dominique C. on either side of Dominique. Green all around. Private grounds. The C.s' garden. About eight o'clock in the evening. Lying on the earth. Three smiling corpses.

Lovers much later in the night.

O.R.: the fact of experiencing something different for once.
Dominique: an experience. O.R.: the fact of feeling something as an enlargement or enrichment of awareness, knowledge, aptitudes.
Dominique: an experience. O.R. on page 659 in the dictionary.
Dominique, in the kitchen, busy cooking an egg: persevering. O.R. confronting words. Face to face. Word by word. A matter of words. An atmosphere being created half wordlessly in the warm afternoon of the month of July.

On each new page a new thing is preparing, attracting all attention, coming into being so that once more, once more are traced the shimmering and excessive lines of the manuscript. Immediately into the business of reading. And carried along by what follows.

But on the same page: O.R., between two rows of foodstuffs, is picking tins of preserves. Air conditioning. O.R., a shopping list in her hands. The metal, cold against the hand on the handle of the shopping cart. Cold hands. Goose flesh. The shopping list: simple words. Now with the cashier, the employee. Everyday life: problematical words.

In the kitchen, O.R., Dominique C., Mathieu, Dominique and Henri. Together again for the first time since their all-night session of drinking and discussing together. Sitting around the table with a large platter filled with fresh fruit. Elbows leaning on the edge of the table. Looking at each other in silence. Bursting into laughter.

The others are somewhere else.

The five of them. Brought together by a word, a figure. A unity which weighs in the existence of each of them. The night goes on, making its way through their words or the story ventures into metaphor: TITLE OF STORY. The story itself. Told in its title. Slowly, the night goes on.

They stay up in the white light of the kitchen, around the table, with the coffee pot.

They stay up all this time. Spend the whole night beside one another. Attentive but relaxed. Henri is reading poems by Miron. Starts the same ones several times. Henri's voice. The buzzing of a fly caught in the door screen. The text being read. The night goes on forever. Right through till dawn. They leave. O.R. and Dominique remain alone. Rain starts to fall.

To write the present passage. A passage which opens on nothing but the relative positions of a hand and eye and some paper. The passage from desired words to written words. A gesture which draws attention and concentrates it within a few sentences, hoping thus to attain various new dimensions in seeing.

Anything can be written, anything not essential, in this passage. Anything that can be said and which speaks from within can be inscribed and left as a testimony to the chance of time.

Any desired thing can be written. Only evidence, not having to be translated in the curved lines of language, is an exception to the rule of words. Evidence belongs to an other than literary order. Thus the writing of and perseverance in composing this text implies a bias for literature, for repetition.

Written things.

'Not much to say to each other. Not much to write ...' Several times things gain importance in the text. Thing as a general term used to designate either a difficult reality to explain or a circumstance, a fact it would be superfluous to make specific.

Deep down in things

O.R. and Dominique are deep in sleep. The telephone ringing. Rain on the roof. Street noises. The telephone ringing.

The things come by themselves

in every sort of shape to warn us that it's time to open our eyes.

O.R. sitting on the edge of the bed. Dominique asleep in the damp sheets.

The page turned. From one end of the book to the other: 1. the space reserved for O.R. and the others. 2. the space necessary for the completion of the text.

The page turned, eyes anticipating the next chapter. The text goes on with the same characters and from time to time a few variables. In the text as elsewhere.

O.R. and Dominique got up early this morning. The rain a sign of a change in the weather. Different.

The production of a text.

Not much different from existing ones, but unique, unmatched. A single page of text. Written in the continuity of a mode of composition resembling others in the past, suggesting others to come.

The cancellation of one thing for the benefit of another. The text confronting the text's precipitousness. Words which take their meaning from other words at the expense of the characters, sketches of men and women made to remain such. Henri, apparently a stranger, in all these instances experienced by Mathieu, Dominique, O.R. and Dominique C. But. Henri in the text in the same regard as the others. A character.

Henri in a space.

The text: Henri alone, Henri in a crowd. Himself a variable among the others. On Saint-Denis Street. At four o'clock in the afternoon, in the rain. In the grayness. A passerby like the others. Different because he is named and inscribed in the text.

The life of a text. Life through a text. A different reality. Taking on importance because it becomes the centre of attraction, because attention is focused on a specific man, his private life.

Henri's private life.

Henri alone in his room. Listening. Music. A private life. A life which is temporarily taking place in a vacuum. Comfortably. Intimate with things, with his flesh. Aware. Henri in the present. Selfish and in love at the same time.

Private life: since the others are extravagant and gradually fill up the space (in cubic feet) needed for their highly intimate actions. Private ... lives of others, their words, personalities, pretenses. Their affection also.

Henri in the privacy of his room. Eyes wide open. No comparison. Wide open: a seer.

Henri's words.

Few, but full of consequence. Because political. Words within everyone's reach. Clear and precise. Exposing corruption, provoking reactions for better or worse. Henri beyond problematical words. In this sense, engaged in history, in the trajectory of inordinate actions. Words which have nothing to do with this text: necessary words, prerequisites which need continually to be repeated.

Henri's words are the first on others' blacklists. Action words that repetition has made even more caustic. Troubled words. Indispensible words. Henri with words on the floor of the Maurice Richard arena, this twelfth evening of the month of July. In the heat and sweat. Elsewhere than in the text.

Henri in the text, between the words. A character revealed after several pages of writing but present from the very first lines in the book.

Note.

Henri at the florist's. Surrounded by flowers, stems, ferns. A smell, they say, of death. Sweet death, surely a happy death. At the florist's. Air conditioning. Flowers in the coolness, they say, embalm the air. Henri, his hand on the green of the rose stem which smells of rose and distracts him. Which smells of rose and makes him happy. At the florist's, a rose is not yet a rose. The red rose: the folly of grandeur (esthetics in the colour) obvious in these words.