

PERFORMANCES
IN ABSENTIA

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"I" posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to "me," becomes my echo to whom I say you and who says you to me. This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition in language.' (Emile Benevise) You and I. I and you. Where is you/me? Where are these identifying terms when the bodies which speak doesn't stand beside their words? How many possibilities of "you" and "I" are there when the page leaves our bodies? And to you, reader, how much of my "I" becomes you and how much of my "you" becomes your "you"? Are the images sounds feelings around our self-word-shells enough to establish solid ground? Doesn't all writing call forth an absence? Socrates knew this, so did Derrida. The written form is removed from its author, from presence, from physicality, from context, from world, from tangible graspable reality. All of writing distances — away from the proximity we would have if we were to be beside one another, looking into each other's eyes, feeling the breath come out of our words. "I" and "You" are pronouns which make room for the me/you-ness of us. They make room for all the singularity of ourselves in the moment we say them. "I" encompasses the fullness of myself in a moment; "You" encompasses my address, my looking out, my reach, gaze, my outward glance, my lack. When you speak, my "I" becomes yours, and my "You" turns into myself. When we are together our words keep switching and somehow our worlds retain some semblance, some order. Somehow that which surrounds holds our pervasive movements. Our context gives us to ourselves. And when our context loses sight and the pervasive infinitely reproducible page comes into view? Then what? Then how do our words stand-in? On the page, isn't the I-ness of I and You-ness of you lost? Our words merely stand in for the moments of which they were first spoken; however, this moment never is captured fully, for never was it really ever in its utter fullness for it to be fully captured. And so, this new moment, the moment of the words' re-articulation, the moment that the new reader finds them, this moment becomes now what they are — fully in their partially. All writing works like this, removed from this initial encounter which holds an "I" and "You" in place without a second layer of doubling. For when I read "I" and "You" I cannot tell which "I" is which, and whose "You" belongs to whom. There is the 3rd and 4th, along with a reader's 1st and 2nd. I, as reader, cannot fully become, you, as writer. But I reach out to you, nonetheless. And you instruct me on how to reach you as you instruct me on how to reach your "you". And so this "You", the you of the writer, the you that you will soon read. What is this you? I, as writer can say that it *is* a specific you — yes, I had a particular "you" in mind in creating this text. But this doesn't tell you anything about this you. Nor would it tell you much about this you were I to say a name, tell a story of the you's existence within my own, etc. A "you" of this magnitude must always be a reach out from an "I". This imagined "you" is quite foundational in the semantic utterance of I/You. This "you" is what "I" lack. This "you" is the fullness within myself that I am unable to achieve within the absoluteness of "I". This You is the reach outwards that attempts to fill me -- and in its imaginings, in its pull, so too does this "you" fill me. In the imagined gesture of a you, in the imagined situation of I/You that will never be realized, in this very gesture I am able apply a filling, to pour concrete You-ness into Me cast. You fill me. A fullness that occurs through an I/You that never was, an encounter totally fictive, both in its articulation and realization and futurity; but an encounter dreamed up for a realization, that reaches, holds, and pervades me. In that encounter, I was partially there, and you were even more partial to the thereness that was there. And together? What were we? Where was the we-ness of an encounter? The "we" encounter was there, really there, merely devoid of physicality, touch, gazes, gestures, and the warmth of reality. The encounter was born into absence, reaching out from this non-place, extending outwards from a context devoid of Me/You into a future Me/You that would never exist. So then, where were we, really? Nowhere to be found. Except in the elusiveness of an image whose meaning lay in what it could not hold, and the word traces of the imagined future born out of its negativity.

Martigny Tower



You: are seated on the altar, legs crossed, eyes closed, hands open, patches of sun against you *as I:* am taking one step every minute approaching, blindfolded, *until I:* reach the topmost step and lay my head in your hands *until you:* come up from behind and lift a vase slowly pouring honey over my face taking care, taking time *and then you:* from behind, lift another vase and slowly pour milk over my face, with care, with time *and then I:* lie across the topmost step and recite Freud's essay on

the developmental phases of sexuality *as you*: trace a circular pathway on the altar chanting an adjective with every step *until our*: words begin to bleed into one another

Martigny Doorway



I: am crouched in the doorway, trying to fit *as You*: rush towards me and keep trying to fit in the door with me until you are stable *and then we wait as I*: am still with you in an awkward pose until I cannot bear it and I collapse on the step *and You*: collapse on me *and We*: roll onto the stone floor twisting our bodies into

one-another until we are no longer seen *and then* **We**: repeat this action, switching roles, alternating intensity and exchanging outfits

Trient Bathtub



We: sit naked in the bathtub, facing each other, then there is a *long pause*, after which **I**: lean in past your head, and yell out to the mountains “I am” after which **You**: lean in past my head, and yell out to the mountains a response, *pause*, and then say “I am”, *and then there is another pause followed by Us*: repeating this, exchanging our roles and changing intensity, *until hours pass and*, we step out of the bathtub and face one another, *with a long*

pause just before I: sing one note, while slowly and painstakingly lifting the pole from out of the ground and then walk away after which You: painstaking lift the bathtub and drag it away while simultaneously singing one note slowly and fully

Champex - street corner



I: enter from the left, stand by the pole with arms stretched upwards *as* **You:** enter from right, stand by the door with one hand firmly on the handle *and there is then a long pause followed by* **Me:** frantically try to climb the pole in short syncopated bursts *while* **You:** frantically try to open the door also in short syncopated bursts, both of which are offset by moments of stillness, *and then* **I:** walk slowly to the door while you are leaning all your weight on the handle and **We:** (together) continue to pull on the handle,

kick at it, fight it, enact violence upon it until we are both able to enter.

Courmayeur Construction Site



We: start from a seated position on the top of the mound, and one at a time, we walk towards the orange truck, remove a can of red paint, walk back to the top of the hill, open the can of paint and proceed to roll down the hill with the paint can *and this continues* until there are no more paint cans *after which* **I:** drive off in the bulldozer *and* **You:** drive off in the truck

Abandoned House - Mt Favre



We: prepare ample water and food *and then* spend one week living in this house without leaving and without speaking (if visitors come, we welcome them kindly into the world we are creating; however, if they stay long enough they will soon get a taste of the oddities that abound this situation, both tangible and intangible psychodynamic components) *and then on day 5 I:* lie down on the floor and do not move *and then on day 6 You:* lie down on the floor and do not move *and then on day 7 We:* are able to speak and speaking reaches highly excessive levels *until on the morning of day 8 We:* leave.

Nets - Mt Favre



We: cover each hole in the closest net with a different coloured paper *and* cover each hole in the farthest net with a different coloured fabric *and then* **We:** begin with the closest net, breaching one of our limbs through a hole (head, hand, foot) *and when* each limb is breached **We:** perform a repetitive action, sound or word(s) *and* **We:** continue until each colour is breached *and then* **We:** move on to the farthest net again breaching one of our limbs through a hole in the net *and* each time a limb passes through a hole that limb must put on the fabric that is covering the hole *and then* that limb must re-perform a repetitive action from the prior stage,

however now with greater restriction and **We**: continue this until each colour is breached.

Wood Pile - Mt Favre



standing beside the woodpile, staring at the mountainside

I: pick up a piece of wood and apply anger

You: pick up a piece of wood and apply care

I: pick up a piece of wood and apply resistance

You: pick up a piece of wood and apply joy

We: *in an even pace, taking turns (and not)*

work with the wood and these emotions

Counter Weight - Mt Favre



We: lie beneath the weight looking up and speak softly to each other about fears of death until we have exhausted words *after which* **We:** *then* write notes to death and place them in-between the bricks *and then* **We:** each inflate 10 balloons and write our names on them *and then* **We:** tie the balloons to a rock underneath the weight *and then* **We:** stand on top of the weight and slowly cut the cord.

Refuge Elizabetha - Porta Potty



We: are tied to the Porta-potty facing the door.

I: try to escape, but cannot.

You: try to make love to the wall, but cannot.

I: try to feel emptiness, but cannot.

You: try to feel happiness, but cannot.

We: begin shaking, violently. Words come out of our mouths.

We: pee our pants.

Les Sainte Chapelle - La Gorge



We invite all of our friends and family to sit on the benches and the grass. For those who cannot come we imagine their presence. **We** stand outside the door to the church. **We** announce that we are getting married, but only for one day. **We** announce that on this day of marriage we will live it as though it is an eternity, as though the vows that we project eternally are eternal within this life, whereby life is this one particular day. **We** receive the blessings of our friends and family.

- Step 1- we enter the church and create sanctity
- Step 2- we enter the rightmost hut and create passion
- Step 3- we enter the leftmost hut and create security
- Step 4- we enter the farthest-most hut and create memory
- Step 5- we return to the front of the church and welcome finality

Les Contamines - triangle hut



We are locked inside (with water) for 12 consecutive hours *and* at the start of each hour we sing one song *and* the song can last as long as we want to sustain it; *however*, all we can utter, all we can do, is be attentive to this song, this theme and and nothing else *and* when the hour is over, the song is done, and the next song begins.

Hour 1 is a song of birth, **Hour 2** is a song of fleeting joys, **Hour 3** is a song of testing limits, **Hour 4** is a song of losing sense of what is meaningful, **Hour 5** is a song of impatience, **Hour 6** is a song of destruction and desolation, **Hour 7** is a song of rest, **Hour 8** is a song of the first buds of spring, **Hour 9** is a song of new meanings of freedom, **Hour 10** is a song of war, **Hour 11** is a song of divine utterances, and **Hour 12** is a song of pure acceptance

Cardboard - Berlin, Kreuzberg



We lie on the cardboard and begin cuddling *and* when someone passes we implore them to cuddle with us, pleading with great desperation in our voices *for* their cuddles are what we need to survive without which, we are lost *and* if someone gets close we get quite timid, quite scared, quite apprehensive, *because* we need their cuddles, but we have been without cuddles for so long that we aren't sure how to receive them; *moreover*, the cardboard is not large enough to comfortably manage the cuddles of others *and so* as they approach one of us grabs them in, while the other pushes them away *and so* it becomes a strange dance of desire and distance as we know what we want but cannot achieve it *and then* at some point, if the stranger is resilient enough, we may succeed in integrating them into our cardboard home *and* once integrated, they are one of us, and their cuddles are easy and good and will never be rejected, *until* of course they leave, at which point we enter into utter despair and implore them to return *until* they are out of sight.

Corner with Tree - Berlin, Mitte



Our bodies face one another, as close as we can possibly be as we stand in the middle of the square at the edge where the green meets the concrete *and* next to us is a roll of black fabric 100 feet long and **We:** continue to ask passersby to wrap us until we are entirely covered in the fabric *and* as the last inch of fabric circles us, we stop speaking and we fall to the ground together *and then* the next 3 hours are spent unraveling which becomes a process involving: slowness, speed, love, desperation, calmness, continuity, fragmentation, anger, tenderness, fatigue, vitality, hunger, peculiarity, curiosity, feeling, numbness, boldness and wisdom *and so once* we are unravelled we sit in place and talk to one another with our eyes closed for a short duration *and* as we continue talking we then begin to move along the lines of fabric (following it with our hands) moving away until our voices are no longer heard.

Airport Office - Berlin, Tempelhof



We find our way into the building and each find an office that suits us quite nicely after which we sit down to begin our work, yet as we begin we have trouble understanding what our work really is, yet we persist in trying to do it *until* we then realize, that the struggle is the work, that the work are questions of “how do we work when we do not know”, “how do we make when we are unmaking,” and, “how do we enter into the world when we are fragmented and constituted by ambiguity,” *but* we still continue to try to find our way into working and we intermittently write about this, this struggle, this hardness, this ambiguity, this unknowing, this moving in/out, this strangeness *and* occasionally, we call out the window as loud as we can, asking questions to the other, not knowing where they are, not knowing in which office they are in, *and* this continues until the work is complete upon which we yell out the window - “the work is complete!” - *and when this happens* if only one of us is finished, then no response is uttered by the other, in which case the person who yelled out must return and enter back into a state of ambiguity, *but* once both of us have completed, and given the affirmative and “the work is complete” is yelled back to one-another, *then* we then stand by the window with our texts and read them out, very loudly, exchanging one word for another, until the entirety of the text is read.

2 Swings - Berlin, Kreuzberg



Our performance entails 10 movements, each of which lasts around 5 minutes *as We* are dressed in a common single-toned colour *and* we each get on a swing *and* every time the swing swings we utter 1-3 words.

Movement 1 is Beginnings, **Movement 2** is where I say verbs and you say nouns, Movement 3 is where I say "I," "You," "They," "He," "She," or "It," and you say adjectives, **Movement 4** is on distance, **Movement 5** is on lightness, **Movement 6** is on movement, **Movement 7** is on unity, Movement 8 is where I speak in Hebrew and you speak in French, **Movement 9** is where I am a child and you are an old woman and **Movement 10** is on endings.

Yellow Chairs - Berlin, Gesundbrunnen



We sit and we wait *as* we look straight ahead and our bodies lightly touch *and* our waiting is calm, and resolute for we know something true will occur, we just do not know exactly when *and so* we repeat to ourselves silently that something true/good/powerful will occur if we wait for it *and* we convince ourselves of this *and* perhaps we whisper a few of these convincing thoughts, always looking ahead, always focusing forward *and* minutes upon minutes pass *and* at times we hum a delicate tune, lightly, always looking forward and calmly waiting *and so* hours begin to pass and the same focus and lightness is still present *and* at times we are whispering encouraging words to ourselves and the other and at times we are humming softly, always focusing with calm and resolute anticipation *until* at a certain point, something happens -- the thing we were waiting for -- *and* when it happens there is no doubt that this is it *and* once it occurs we then look at each other for as long as needed *and* we then get up, arm in arm, and walk away.

Abandoned Airport - Berlin, Neukolin



A rope of about 3 meters length is attached to both of our waists *as* we stand one in front of the other, each one of us on a pink line *for* each pink line represents one thought *and* the moment a new thought comes we must move to another pink line *and* if the rope is too taught to move, we then do everything we can to try to stay on the thought until we can move on (some tactics can include self-induced meditation, mantra, repetition, etc.)

Staircase - museum of contemporary art Berlin



We are dressed in white and we stand at the bottom of the staircase and we adopt neutral glances as we are practicing waving, and softly saying hello and when a passerby passes by we slowly move our glances to theirs, catch their eye, and continue our practice.

Urban bags of rocks - Berlin, Mitte



We begin by methodically taking stones out of one of the bags and placing them one by one in a line along the sidewalk in such a fashion like a well oiled machine, moving in stride, stone by stone, line by line, with utter precision *and* we continue until all the stones are emptied *and then* we take positions, each at the farthest stone, *and* we feel each stone, and we ask it a question, and we wait for an answer, and we move on, *until*, at the end we are met with each other and we act resolute, determined, adamant, unswerving, persistent, indefatigable and tenacious.

Dirt with barricade - Fleet Street, London



We perform the following actions: sitting, pointing, standing, laying, feeling, whispering, *but* at most only 2 actions can be done simultaneously *and* every time an action is chosen it must persist until someone asks "what are you doing?" at which point we switch actions.

Blue fence - Bristol



We spend 3 hours, dressed in yellow, standing against, studying blue

Diversion Ahead - London



Ahead of the sign **we**: fumble, disassociate, collapse, wander, look at the sky, rub the sidewalk, rub our bellies, shake, kick the air, twirl our fingers, make up beliefs *and* at times each of us helps the other to come back to rational behaviour