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Narrative and Unknowing: Tidal Writing by Marguerite Duras and Joan London

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The old patriarchal aesthetics of flow guarantee an illusion for the reader that she is linked to a regular knowledge drip. The narrator, that quiet nurse, comes soft-shod, cool-handed to check on the flow, to insure the regularity of the pulse. The reader barely knows that the nurse has been. But there's a murmuring assurance in her ear: First know this and this and this and later you will be able to digest this and this and this, even be infused /enthused with all sorts of God-given ironies: you thought you knew this but retrospectively it turned out to be that; you'll be able to have your laugh at the expense of the characters, Reader. A loop or two, a formal invagination or two, perhaps, but no sharp shifts, no jagged fault-lines, no abysses you could point your finger at, no narratorial sentences bristling with hackles, just melody, up and down like the folds of the Cotswolds, like the serene flute line of rationality.

A couple of years back, I thought I knew where I stood with the old aesthetics of flow, with narrative as knowledge. I had tried to communicate with some students an enthusiasm for the meteoric, fragmented, oxymoronic, beauty of Rimbaud's "Barbarian", which fiercely resists mimesis, or literature as representation, hijacking at every turn the mimetic drive to integrate in continuous "scene". It resists the propositional, the thetic, or statement of where one stands. This is my place; this is where I stand. It promotes the space of impossible encounters - no utopian comfort here: this is the out-of-site; the out-of-mind of ecstasy. Grown-ups make propositions, it seems, delinquent adolescents promote un-knowledge. Here the only active verb is the promotion of the fictional: They don't exist, the recurrent unknowable, outside. If Rimbaud uses a simple verb, it has the shock of irreducible mystery that the tiny child contemplates. Madame se tient trop debout dans la prairie/Prochaine. Madame is too upright in the next field.

Anyway, from "Barbarian" I want to float the lines, the moment of ecstatic oxymoronic fall-out, the moment at which the past participle takes us into the future perfect of fiction. And the feminine voice come to the depth of the volcanos and arctic caves ...

This is the voice of un-knowledge or rather the trace of un-knowing.

What do you think of it, I said to my students.

Nugh, they said. It doesn't flow.

My sickness from that phrase "It doesn't flow" reached its critical phase. So I wrote:

Flo sux

Do you want to be buoyed by the viscous, mellifluous current; do you want a sure poultice for your wounds; do you want continuities; do you want a certain mirror from page to page? You want a prediction rule and a foreshadowing rule and a consistency rule and life-comes-full-circle rule? Flow rules ok? But does it flow? you say.

I reckon flow sucks.

Look sweetheart, I'm a woman who's edgy. I like edges; I like the slipping edge, like dislocation at the fault-line of I and I and I from me, a shattering and refaceting of the compound eye, like feeling my resistances against the AC and the DC, lending my miraculously stretchy skin to those charged intervals. I like unlikely couplings winking across impossible space ... I like a surface where dispersed entities - words, lines, blobs - spark their reciprocal fires to find no specular satisfaction but intensify their differences. Clusters of potentiality (you can call them characters or figures or motifs or ...) process their singular losses and let their separation testify to this in their cross-hatchings. I will not use an overall treatment as if they are the same, subdued the same. They can be elements from other perceptual repertoires but they're not just promiscuously quoted. Yet Daisy Duck can live in Ledaville. These elements, wherever they come from, are not subdued by a new master framing: they're not set in commerce with one another for the profit of the Big M Message. But they celebrate their irreducible differences in a pyrotechnics of loss, a polylogue of potlach. They love the loss across space from their nervy excited edges. I, I am pleased in the charged field of that improbable dialogue.

I want a waking pleasure. Flo sux.

I did not know. I never know. What I disagree with now is the frenzy of this piece, the jump-cutting, as fidgety as rock-video dada, the silly celebration of the hectic and the promiscuous, the pugilistic punch punch punch, the militant polemics, the inherent exhibitionism of the manifesto. I have to start again.

Restorative time

It seems that writing which has mnemonic force, which stays with the reader, enables these encounters between registers of the 'fabulous' and the 'real' in a quiet language, sometimes barely above the mesmeric murmur, a slow progression; it is a practice that allows re-access to what, after Nietzsche, Kristeva has called monumental or massive time.¹ It is restorative of a primitive unsayable, the loss of which is incurred at birth with that first boundary crossing and the violence of projection into the curriculum vitae. This is, paradoxically, the conservative function of some of the most adventurous contemporary writing. Against my own practice, which has frequently been agitated and hectic, to say the least, I try to learn from what has seduced me in the slow-wave writing of London and Duras, writing which resists nevertheless, the aesthetics of 'flow'. This is writing within whose diegetic movement uncanny spaces open up to be enflamed with a searing avowal or torn by a primeval cry.

I keep reading Duras.

I never know.

She never knows.

Even more so, I am in a state of amorous envy for the way she doesn't know.

She keeps writing the same story. When she forgets and writes a different story, I grieve until I realise that it is the same story of unknowing, just a different fable. I move from *The Vice Consul* to *The Lover*, to *Emily L*, or *The North China Lover* into the slow descent of *Summer Rain*, for instance.

Almost struck by mutism, these texts murmur. Stutter. Come to a halt. Curl up foetally. They rock autistically. They let rip a cry that tears them apart. So long, so awful is the stillness around this cry that for heart-cramping stretches I think there's no language left. I am marooned in black stillness that laps at the edges of my loss like a terrible, vacant repetition. Laughter seizes a character from nowhere and I am called forth and back to my own madness, into the crazy residence of my un-knowledge, of my-still-unsayable. These texts proceed not by general proposition but rather eke out a tenuous hold on sound in a kind of kindergarten vocabulary whose each word is rolled on the tongue as does Samuel Beckett's *Malone* with his pebbles from pocket to mouth and back again. Just to keep them moving, that is something. Each pebble-word is sour and old and each time shockingly new in the simplicity of its mystery. I taste its mysterious blessing like a host on my tongue. Orphaned by God and his Special-K knowledge, I taste them serially, these pebble-words, one by one, each time as a hopeless grace. Bereft. I've lost the certain syntax that links my little un-knowing brain to Knowledge.

Somewhere in the past - or did I dream that too? - there has been an awful and hopeless passion: in the beginning, for a tender little brother, brutalised by an older violent one, addicted to turning the Monopoly of Mother Love to the profit of pain, a passion also for a radiant stranger with whom I could never utter my truth but through whose body I shared it for a moment. I've forgotten how now. It's always been there. But at every moment I have to re-invent how our eyes and then our bodies met beyond language. No preparation. No resolution. The crisis or the climax defied our brains. No petering out. A passion so immense that the rest binds me to repetition. And forgetting. Forgetting which binds me forever to this story. As if sucked back into Mama, big men go to sleep in such slowness. The relentless, slow approach of absolute stillness.

In the manically jump-cutting world of flash-flash-flash, which Mary Fallon has called *Dissociation City*,² this slowness is something. These texts that grow and shrink word by word around silence and are shaped by it, give me back the gift of un-knowing, of wonder. This is what I keep trying to remember but never seem to learn in my own garrulous excitability.

In a one time village, now an urban ghetto called Vitry-Sur-Seine, caught between the cavernous corpse of the National Route 7 and the line of the TGV, the Very Fast Train, there lives an improbable family, the family of the 1990 novel, *Summer Rain*.³ It's only improbable of course from the perspective of salon fiction with its officially educated and well-fed characters who articulate arguments in paragraphs as in a seminar. Like most people in the world, these characters are so ordinarily bereft that their world is banal ^ pleurer, so ordinary it'd make you weep. An immigrant Italian labourer and a Transiberian traveller, who once had an encounter on a train are the parents. So huge was this encounter on the Transiberian train that for years she has to keep taking the train to try to recover, to recover it, to recover from it. And then, somehow, one day, language-less, with only the remnant tune of a song whose words are gone, she drifts into France. She is adrift. She doesn't have, has never had, any narrative drive. She comes to Vitry-Sur-Seine. She and the Italian collide. They so impact into one another

that they are compacted. And they share their forgetting. They forget to work. They have a child. They forget. The town forgets them but lets them use a disused hut. A lean-to is somehow added for the extra children they forget not to have. The eldest, Ernesto, is not the eldest, but the mother keeps forgetting that there was one before whom she lost. There is always loss. Always already, as they say. Ernesto is the genius of forgetting, has the plenitude of penniless, stateless loss. He is identical to his six siblings and the lost one who came before, not at first, but they all become like him. He is the lover, chaste, beyond chastity, of his sister, Jeanne.

As in a fetishised memory, a grainily lit image from the past, the mother is always in the kitchen of the "casa" peeling potatoes. As in Van Gogh's "The Potato Eaters," they are always about to eat potatoes.

The mother and the father forget to send their children to school. This is how Ernesto learns to read, to make absolute connections between solitudes:

Several days after the finding of the book, Ernesto went to see the tree, and he stayed near it, sitting on the bank opposite the fence that surrounded it. Then he started going there every day. (...)

One evening the brothers and sisters asked Jeanne what she thought; if she had any ideas about it. She thought Ernesto must have been struck by the loneliness both of the tree and of the book, with the ordeal inflicted on it, and the tree in its loneliness, as both suffering the same fate. Ernesto told her it was when he found the burned book that he remembered the imprisoned tree. He thought of both of them together, and of how to make their destinies touch, merge, and mingle in his, Ernesto's, own head and body, so that he might come to reach the unknown, the unknown of all life.

(...)

At this point in his life Ernesto was supposed not to be able to read, but he said he'd read some of the burned book. Just like that, he said, without thinking about it, without even knowing what he was doing. And then - well, then, he stopped bothering whether he was really reading or not, or even what reading was - whether it was this or something else. At first, he said, he'd tried like this: he took the shape of a word and quite arbitrarily gave it a provisional meaning. Then he gave the next word another meaning, but in terms of the assumed provisional meaning of the first word. And he went on like that until the whole sentence yielded some sense. In this way he came to see that reading was a kind of continuous unfolding within his own body of a story invented by himself. And thus it seemed to him the book was about a king who reigned in a country a long way away from France, a king who was a foreigner like himself, a very long time ago. He had the impression he'd been reading not many stories about many kings but the story of one king of a certain country at a certain time. Only part of his story, because of the way the book had been damaged - just some of the things he did and certain episodes of his life.

(Summer Rain: 12-14)

The imprisoned tree and the book with the hole are the singular motifs between which he finds an almost unbearable knowledge. A teacher hears about this. Recognizes that yes, that is the story, about a Jewish King. Ernesto goes to school. For ten days he sits in

the classroom and stands alone in the yard.

Then he stops, because as he finally explains it to his potato-peeling mother, they teach him what he doesn't know. A lovely joke within this miserable scenario is that when the mother tries to explain the brilliance of this paradox to her husband, she says: Now wait a minute. It was so good what he said. He can't go to school because they teach him what he knows. No, it was better than that, it was

He knows from the beginning, that despite all knowledge he has absorbed from the porous universe (a positivist joke, that the world leaks knowledge), there is something missing. Oh, everything, Ernesto assures us in his vision of the Big Bang beginning, everything, every little sub-atomic bit was in place from the instant of creation, from every little spark and space, to the rabbit pausing over the grassy tuft. At that first moment the rabbit was twitching its nose at the Something Missing. Missing is the reason for this all of this. Ernesto learns, as if by osmotic connection to the porous surfaces of the world, all available knowledge. All that they teach in school is what he doesn't know, what he knows not to know, the reason. His fame spreads. Embarrassed reporters do their condescending best to consult the illiterate parents. Hovering at the end of the book is the inevitable menace of their loss of him: Ernesto is called to a new becoming as National Icon, and to circulate in the economy as such. This is such a country that its festering pockets of dystopia are beautifully functional, apart from providing reserves of labour: Vitry-sur-Seine has produced a sublime manifestation of genius. Ernesto, whose negative knowledge is fetishised as the positive sum of all knowledge is thus recuperated, evacuated, commodified.

Losing Ernesto to the Commodity Circus, the mother is taken by the return of the forgotten words of the song which she has hummed through the childhood of all the children: they are all taken by the words of the Neva, her song of loss. Woven into the song line is the psalmody of Ernesto's reading as he performs the grief of the Jewish King, of David, before he disappears.

Something has been won. The mother finds the untranslatable language of her pain.

That night, suddenly, the words of La Neva came back to the mother without her realising it. At first it was just a word here and there, and then they grew more frequent, and finally whole phrases came, linked up with one another. As if drunk, the mother was, that evening, perhaps from singing. The remembered words were not Russian but a mixture of a Caucasian and some Jewish dialect, with a sweetness dating from before the wars, the charnel-houses, and the mountains of dead.

It was when the mother sang more softly that Ernesto spoke of the King of Israel.

We are heroes, said the King.

All men are heroes.

This is the son of David, King of Jerusalem, says Ernesto. The one who spoke of chasing the wind and the Vanity of Vanities.

Ernesto hesitates, then brings it out: Our King.

(...)

Then the singing grows quieter and Ernesto speaks of the King of Israel.

I, son of David, King of Jerusalem, lost hope, recites Ernesto, and I grieved over all I had hoped for, Evil. Uncertainty, and the certainty that went before it.

Plagues. I grieved over plagues.

The barren search for God.

Hunger. Poverty and hunger.

Wars. I grieved over wars.

The ceremonial of life.

All the mistakes.

I grieved over lying and evil and doubt.

Poems and songs.

I grieved over silence.

Lust too. And murder.

(...)

Love, says Ernesto, he grieved for that.

Love, says Ernesto again, he grieved for that beyond his own life, his own strength.

Love for her.

Silence. Jeanne and Ernesto have closed their eyes.

Stormy skies, says Ernesto. He grieved for them.

Summer rain.

Childhood.

La Neva goes on, faint, slow, mingled with tears.

(Summer Rain: 136-139)

This stop-start narrative with its strange little voice-plays, its poetic and autistic stases, its processing of forgetting, and the recovery of loss, gives me a fable about knowledge and the return of the untellable which I would call feminine. And the feminine voice come to the depths ... and when it comes, it is against the flow of knowledge.

LOSING ONE'S WAY

Again in Joan London's Letter to Constantine I move forward by losing my way, by coming adrift, I see by peering into the dark recesses beyond the lit surfaces; I can only know by taking on the burden of the unknowable.

Letter to Constantine extends and amplifies the achievement of London's prize-winning first collection of short fiction.⁴ As the book unfolds, stretches and folds again from sentence to sentence, from movement to movement, from story to story, it maintains a fine poise between dramatically situated perception and reverberative silence. London's is the art of in-folding or implication, as Marie Maclean celebrates it in her *Gendered Language, Gendered Criticism*.⁵

These stories never go for the quick small change of the supermarket epiphany, the check-out flashes of much short fiction. Their understanding is not punctual but cumulative, achieved through the tidal advances and retreats of the writing, not unlike that of Duras' work, haunted as it was by the first novel and the anguished struggle informing it, *The Sea Wall*.⁶ The reader has to give time to the dialogue between limpid stasis and the always encroaching darker undertow. These stories are often oceanic, always musical in composition, but never reaching for these qualities with stylistic sleight of hand or big noise.

Through the double impulses towards excursion and incursion, of unfolding and infolding, of encounter and return to the site of loss, through the restoration or fading of a landscape ("Letter to Constantine"), through the filmic recovery of potent silences ("The Woman Who Only Answered Yes or No"), through the overlap of now with what has been, what will come or might have been ("The Angry Girl"/"Maisie Goes to India"), it's always through a kind of estuarine pulse that these stories achieve their complex overlay of emotive and intellectual spaces.

When the tide that takes the reader is dream-like ("The Woman Who Only Answered Yes or No"/"Angels"), the real light on observed textures lends a hallucinatory reality to the shore. These stories never eschew the interruptions of fluency. They create some of their strongest moments through the inter-shock of waves.

Illness physical or spiritual, individual or collective, becomes a metaphor for the risk involved in unfolding the real, confronting those recesses or pockets, where death, or its small daily rehearsals, moral slackness or habituation, breed their phantoms.

The wonder can come through shared suffering, repeated journeys of loss, hoping for the random re-encounter, as in "The Angry Girl", where another city opens up through the gaps of known streets or in "Angels" whose male narrator suffers a strange rebirth between women grown ambivalent as life-or-death givers. A daughter's loss gives rise to the magnificent fugal music of the last story, "Maisie goes to India," with its restorative vision, in turn poignant and comic, of love's relays, chartering these beyond their tawdry and cruel enactments towards a celebration of nurture across the generations, from mother to daughter, from daughter back to mother, from husband to wife. Here love is rescued to the extent that it recognises the contaminants of a colonialism in which it has been grounded.

What is continuously striking in this writing is its rhythmic control, what Mallarmé called "composing a logic with our fibres," the poise of syntax equally attuned to the swift, nervous fuse and the sleep-encumbered lull, the sense of pace, of periodicity and of its interruptions.

Back from the cold streets their laughter was vast and relieved.

(Letter to Constantine : 28)

To caricature Joan London as a fluid impressionist or mood colourist, as some reviewers⁷ have done, is to deny the shocking and exhilarating pull of the unknown effected at the level of image as well as story:

The horizon was a white electric bar that seemed to draw in everything , sky sea sun like the gateway to some distant, blazing country.

(L to C: 15)

These stories all in their ways challenge that coast-clinging negation of the inland; they are all about ways in which the in-land and the in-scape, unfold. I would suggest that they all in their way point to Desert Knowledge, a knowledge avoided in multiple ways, by excursions across other horizons. They lead back to that interior.

In this interior what matters is the discovery of pockets of silence, the unknown within the known. This can be a recognition of what has always been edited out, as in "The Woman Who Only Answered Yes or No":

When Steiner wanted extras for the harvest, the whole village came walking down the road over the hill "Oh. Those faces, those faces," Steiner murmured, as if they were the harvest. But he didn't use the woman. He tried, but even as an extra, her presence was too powerful. He had to edit her out.

(L to C: 48)

This story, which is a meditation on gendered creativity through the filming of Chekhov's *Seagull*, gives rise to a black and white writing, as in black and white film, finding through the austerity of implication, what can never be articulated through the clamour of high instrumental colour.

Here we have the superb negative reversal:

Below us the lake was dark, the sky silver, as if everything was in reversal.
Far away a single seagull flew, black, into the horizon ...

In the end, I told myself, silence will speak.

(L to C: 58)

In many of these stories it is the troubled tourist from whose fractured consciousness the question arises. Sometimes these questions, encountering the vacuousness of the answer, return lethally to the asker. The enduring unsayable is there in "The Angry Girl" where Agnes, a waif-like artist in exile at the centre of her adoptive family, is only visible to the drifting intelligence of Verna in the nursing home.

At times the waves of this silent knowledge meet in searing seams, yet the writing registers these lesions in the heart tissue without any trace of sentimentality. There is an ironic intelligence at work, and everywhere a wider social dimension to the moral vision. There is the title story, "Letter to Constantine," a millennial parable of the Lucky Country, but never reducible to this, in which we have revealed our own blinkered vision.

In the post-disaster world which this story charts, there are very recognisable glimpses of naively smug and materially cosy White Australia, pale-eyed and confident, devouring its own flesh.

In our quarter everyone I knew grew a little richer each year. Everything became a little more convenient. It was expected, like a birthright. Everyone's children were born healthy. Nobody died. The domino crashes, riots, bankrupt governments happened across borders. Then the borders closed.

(L to C: 13)

Myopic Utopians soon stumble over the border into Dystopia, of course. Here we confront our certain ethical bankruptcy, a failure to take on the burden of history, to unpack that burden in the desert light, and to confront its pockets of shame, its lining of horror.

The wider world begins to take one's breath away, the erotic flare itself demands a luxury of oxygen that can be ill-afforded. The marvellous nomadic trajectories of "Letter to Constantine" are interrupted by these vertical moments even when their message is denied:

But when he turned to me, on the stair landing, pressed me against the wall,
I felt no warmth, only the boldness of his lips and hands. Fire burns on air, I
thought and I had no breath to spare.

(L to C: 14)

If, like all fine short fiction, this does lend a representativeness to liminal moments, to boundary or threshold crossings, the switch of vision is never slickly triggered by some border tripwire or cheap stylistic electrification. "Letter to Constantine" shows in the largesse of its perspective that the only way out of the disaster is to recognise the moral virus within.

I could name causes, give explanations. We had done little else for years.
Yet the true disaster I could not name. I had survived, behind glass, but I
had not been spared.

(L to C: 17-18)

Knowledge can strike the body comically in disjunction from any impress on the brain:

The atmosphere crackled, our hair swung out in brittle spokes.

(L to C: 20)

There's a superb implication of crippled or irrelevant movement here. And with the soundtrack cut by the restaurant window we get this marvellous perception of female complicity from "Angels":

They nodded and laughed, brandishing their forked fingers at one another,
and butted out into a shared ashtray.

(L to C: 30)

The arrival of this knowledge through delirium has been heralded with a wacky variation of the random killer, a bag lady gone militant:

I didn't try to tell them. It wasn't a sudden arrival, more of a recognition, of a presence that had been there all the time. For a week now, or was it years, I had felt it coursing through my blood like a drug, something fretful and chill, and now it had started to speak. Thwack! Her handbag struck me square in the stomach. That was for you! She shouted, thrusting her face at me, and for a moment I accepted the pure insistent logic of that glare.

(L to C: 31)

Again, in "The Inlet," when untranslatable lovelessness within a middle-class family is figured, it takes unexpected agencies. The Indian tourists whom no one bothered to warn about the rip-tides and king waves are casually sacrificed, and a phantom boy driver becomes the angel of revenge, providing one of the most memorable images I have come across in fiction, that of the little sandy crown barely visible above the dashboard, wreaking havoc on the now winter-struck holiday camp.

The inlet splashed the beach in imitation surf.

(L to C: 83)

A superb registration of the lie that is at the centre of this family.

In this book, to arrive at the beginnings of a new knowledge, one must be prepared to lose one's way:

Constantine, there was a time when all the tracks across the desert seemed blown away. Now I realise we were at the apex, at the point of cross-over. But then I could not think of beginnings or endings. Like a desert creature, I had given up everything. I knew only the outline of the plains around me, knew it like the backbone of some lurking familiar animal.

(L to C: 23)

The animal totem, the barely translatable call of the sea beast, or the wail of the heart-broken dog ("Pinch Me, Pinch Me") often pre-figures the new sensitivity to other knowledge.

Losing one's way, is a recognition of the violence of colonial mappings certainly but also of their comic pretension:

Everything had darkened by the time she reached the plains. The horse knew its own way home. She let the reins drop and clutched the rolling muscle of its sides. Where were the Towers of Silence now with their preying birds and eyeless corpses? Where was the soul located? In the treacherous heart? In the milling static of the brain?

Hoofbeats pursued her, Noel bolted past. Now his horse was on the home run he could not stop her wide-hipped gallop. He called out some joke about being late for tea. Tea. Toast with fishpaste, mango jam, fruit cake: the silver teapot that the servants had to polish daily in this climate, the powdered milk in the jug, the vase of roses on the tarnished silver tray.

They laid their rituals like a web across this country, and the bare white country she had left: but all the time drums beat and the songs rose in the village. The brides were children, the camels blinded, the vultures fed on human flesh. Mukhal and Ajib's feet were bleeding. Paradise was cruel.

(L to C: 136)

There is the sense of the broken circuits running counter to the mapped streets through which the narrator of "The Angry Girl" speaks to his loss: Amy's fading consciousness, the loss of the artist, Agnes, who in turn reminds Rose of her lost artistic direction. The whole story is about losing one's way.

Then the superb passage of urban nomadism:

We like the backlands. We like quarries, railway sidings, beaches tucked in between factories. Washing dancing on solitary lines. We like old streets on the outskirts of the city. Old buildings worn and darkened and the gaps between them. Wind blowing down streets like little foreign towns.

(L to C: 117)

This leads to a certain corridor, towards fusion through nurture:

It's not a case of handling, it's a case of becoming one body. I didn't know about this.

Some days we fall asleep. A warm rhythmic sleep that continues the movement of the van. Afternoon sleep, like rooms with open doors, where voices echo as they pass. I wake up hoarse with sentences: Her damp hair clung to her like feathers; or once, They found a black sword buried in her heart.

Aren't these the best sleeps, Amy? Side by side?

(L to C: 117)

In India, the cost of white Australian self-representations is recovered:

In the photograph of you as a tiny girl in Broome you are smiling in a big cane chair. Two Aboriginal women in high-necked Edwardian dresses, their hair pulled back, are standing behind you. Their hands rest on your chair, graceful and protective. You are smiling, but they are very grave.

(L to C: 128)

"A ship is leaving, a ship is arriving." The formal pulsations in their temporal and spatial returns and amplifications are worked through this magnificent last story so that finally, with the approach of Maisie towards George, to the recognisable shores of their life together, there is a wave rise to the meeting of daughters, through the sense of the old and the impending loss:

Are you afraid of dying?

Yes.

A horn sounds, a ship is leaving. A real ship, a real quay, a real time, sixty years ago. But did George and Maisie really think like this?

It's your story now. I've forgotten.

This is the angle of vision I've inherited. This is everything I know.

(L to C: 141)

This access to imaginative connection through the overlap and inter-shock of memory and projection opens up pockets of suggestivity taking us outside the temporality of "Dissociation City." It takes us into a restorative contemplation of what eludes reason, into spaces of productive un-knowing. I would suggest that wave-writing like London's and like Duras' demands a slow reading: the strafing eye of the speed reader will not be rewarded here; it will miss the 'point'. The point is that, unlike narratives written under the thrall of the teleological drive, there is no singular 'point' here. The stories of London, like those of Duras, go on and on and on, and with each reading will yield new enigma casting a troubling light on previous 'knowledge'.

And the feminine voice come to the depths ...

Murdoch University

1. "Women's Time" in Toril Moi *The Kristeva Reader* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 187-213.
 2. In her performance text *Credibility Gulf*.
 3. Duras, Marguerite, *Summer Rain* trans. B. Bray, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990 (*La Pluie d'été* Paris: P.O.L., 1990).
 4. *Sister Ships* Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1986.
 5. *Australian Book Review: Australian Voices*, June 1991, No 131, 32-28.
 6. Duras, Marguerite, *The Sea Wall* tr. Herma Briffault New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1985 (*Un Barrage contre le Pacifique* Paris: Eds Gallimard, 1952).
 7. Exceptions are reviews by the following: Jennifer Livett "Freedom and Constraint" in *Voices*, Summer 1993-1994, 93-94; Katharine England in *Advertiser*, November 13, 1993; Veronica Sen in *Canberra Times* October 2, 1993; Carmel Bird in *Australian Book Review* September 1993; Gail Jones in *Fremantle Arts Review* 8:7. August/September, 1993.
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Writing - Marguerite Duras.pdf - Free download as PDF File (.pdf), Text File (.txt) or read online for free. SaveSave Writing - Marguerite Duras.pdf For Later. 100%(4)100% found this document useful (4 votes). 515 views126 pages. Writing - Marguerite Duras.pdf. Uploaded by. sophbm. Description: Copyright: © All Rights Reserved. I was 29 when I first read Marguerite Duras's 1984 masterpiece, 'The Lover', translated from the French by Barbara Bray. A revelation and a confrontation in equal measure, it was as if I had burst out of an oak-panelled 19th-century gentleman's club - into something exhilarating, sexy, melancholy, truthful, modern and female. If its cool, spare prose and flawless narrative design was somehow representative of the Nouveau Roman, largely associated with Alain Robbe-Grillet, it was clear to me that its major difference was that Duras did not distrust emotion. To write 'The Lover', she drew on her early years living in Saigon with her impoverished mother and belligerent brothers. Marguerite Germaine Marie Donnadiou (4 April 1914 – 3 March 1996), known as Marguerite Duras (French: [maʁɡeʁit(ɛ̃)dit dyʁas]), was a French novelist, playwright, screenwriter, essayist, and experimental filmmaker. Her script for the film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) earned her a nomination for Best Original Screenplay at the Academy Awards. Duras was born Marguerite Donnadiou on 4 April 1914, in Gia Á»nh, Cochinchina, French Indochina (now Vietnam). Her parents, Marie (née Legrand, 1877-1956) and Henri Marguerite Duras, French novelist, screenwriter, scenarist, playwright, and film director, internationally known for her screenplays of *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and *India Song* (1975). The novel *L'Amant* (1984; *The Lover*; film, 1992) won the prestigious Prix Goncourt in 1984. Duras spent most of her life in France. Duras turned regularly to a more abstract and synthetic mode, with fewer characters, less plot and narrative, and fewer of the other elements of traditional fiction; her name was even associated with the nouveau roman (‘new novel’) movement, though she denied such a connection. The semiautobiographical story of *L'Amant*, about a French teenage girl's love affair with a Chinese man 12 years her senior, was revised in the novel *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (1991; *The North China Lover*). DURAS, MargueriteNationality: French. Born: Marguerite Donnadiou in Giadinh, French Indo-China, 1914. Education: Educated in mathematics, law and political science [1] at the Sorbonne, Paris. Although Duras had been writing fiction and directing films for over forty years, she was always considered a rather inaccessible author by the general public. The publication of *The Lover* sparked interest in all her work, which was quickly republished to meet the overwhelming demand. Considered an antinovel because of its stark narrative, unreliable narrator, and fragmentary contrast and insights, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* has also been described as an investigation into human consciousness.