

Words Left Behind

UNOHTUNEET SANAT

LES MOTS OUBLIÉS

IN THE SPRING OF 2003, I had a brief love affair in Paris. At the time, I was working on my *The Lovers' Bed*, which is a collage of sentences taken from Marguerite Duras. My beloved thought the idea of the work was stupid, and urged me to write something myself. I began writing down the things he said, just as I had previously copied words from Duras' texts.

Originally, my intention was not to collect and keep the things he said, but to wipe them from my mind. Writing is a way of erasing things, as Duras says. But soon the phrases began to take on the shape of a new work, *Words Left Behind*. This complements *The Lovers' Bed*, forming a diptych, whose parts mirror each other. Finally, a bed is also brought into the picture, a bed that is the setting for the new story.

As the work begins, the love story is already in the past. The phone rings. In the picture is a sleeping woman, who does not react to the sound. After a moment's pause, someone picks up the receiver, and a man's voice can be heard on the other end: "Have you calmed down now?"

The sleeping woman does not react to the phone conversation at any time. The story goes on outside of her awareness, on the soundtrack. Or does she not want to know? Her sleep does not appear to be very restful.

The man's voice comes from a long way off, along the phone lines, but the woman he is talking to seems to be nearby. She speaks poor French. The man corrects her: "... Because in French, when you say 'horrible', it really means that." What has happened here? Perhaps the woman and the man have different conceptions of what the word implies.

Soon the name Isabelle comes up. The man defends what happened: "She is far away, she is abstract." At the same time, the sleeping woman is turning over in the bed, sensual and physical, anything but abstract. She may be only imaginary, but she is still real.

"This thing about identity... I'm not interested in it," the man declares. The woman maintains him that she did not use that worn-out word. Nevertheless, the man seems to be correct in saying that the woman is still interested in it. The work is about the confusion of identities in a triangle drama. This finally emerges at the end, when the man fantasises about sleeping with the woman. Suddenly, the images and the soundtrack seem to come together, and we get the impression that the words have been addressed to the person in the picture. It is even more agonising to realise that their object was another woman.

The title of the work is explained by the last thing the man says: "All that remains to me of you is images. Words I will forget." And yet, in the video all that is left of the lovers is words. The pictures show an absent third party, the real main character of the story.

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DVD VIDEO 9 min 20 sec, *Words Left Behind*, 2005