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An arrangement

Abstract:

“An arrangement” is an excerpt from a long-form experimental spatial writing work. Adjacent to (but questioning) autofiction, it details a series of encounters between an opaque narrator and building materials around her. Drafted in situ around Naarm/Melbourne, this work emerged through my current doctoral creative practice research. In this work, I draw on concepts such as Haraway’s (2016) sympoiesis, Braidotti’s (2014) nomadic writing and Rendell’s (2011) site-writing to open my fiction practice to its material and spatial surroundings, with a focus on ‘non-places’, spaces such as malls, hotels and lobbies, which are often considered to lack relationality (see Augé 2009). In writing “An arrangement”, I aim to create openings for ambiance (see Matteson 2022) – literary and architectural – to surface subtle relations that persist in these apparently nondescript urban spaces. Through sparse text design and gestural words such as *this* and *here* (also known as deictics; see duPlessis 2019), and drawing inspiration from concrete poetry and artist’s books, “An arrangement” invokes porous nothingnesses. Into these might appear light, shadow, vibrations, movements and other subtle presences – human and nonhuman – that inhabit and affect our spaces of reading and writing. You are encouraged to read this text in a non-place that moves you.

Biographical note:

Angela Glindemann is a queer, autistic writer, editor and PhD candidate living on unceded Wurundjeri land. In her doctoral research at RMIT, she is studying spatial writing, with particular interests in ambient literature, literary ambiance and how texts gesture. Her debut YA novel, *How to be normal*, won the inaugural Walker Books Manuscript Prize and has been shortlisted for the John Marsden Prize for Writing for Young Adults in the 2026 Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards; and she writes across several other genres, including poetry, essays, and experimental forms. She acknowledges support from an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Keywords:

Autofiction, sympoiesis, deixis, porosity, non-places

This is the beginning.

on faux leather

This is the beginning.

She types this sentence, then sets it on its own line. The white space solidifies it somehow, turns it into a performative, maybe. Judith Butler [1] talks about sentences like this, sentences like *I do*, which enact something when they are said. Not the way they are said in rooms like this, though – and not when they are softened with other words, though, like somehow and maybe and though. Tone has something to do with it.

tone of voice, room tone,

She has come here to write (though, somehow, maybe), and it feels like a performance, because people don't come here to write, not in this way. This is why she has come here to write, and this is also why it is not a true beginning. Of course, she thought about it long before she came here, planned it, had a purpose – and, this time, unlike her prior writings, she's had to be public about it: There will be a writing project and a dissertation.

So she's committed to writing places like this, and then come here – not like before, where she'd usually wait longer in a liminal space, not yet writing, the commitment hers alone. There's no real sense of interiority, this time around. Like her first novel – paper bound and pressed into the shelves of bookstores near here. Does it feel real, her friends asked her at that first public event, and she said it is just like a wedding.

against this fabric made to look like skin

animal skin – top-grain leather – the kind with less patina, fewer lines and hollows, an outer layer removed

skin – small grains and depressions, a sense of life, but not with its accompanying porosity, tears

plastic – in the sense of the synthetic material, and not in the sense of being pliable, at least not evidently in the moment

plastic – in the sense of a material that will likely outlast everything around, including her own body

permanence to places like this one, here where she sits

where she is a light detail on faux leather, a bodily line pressing close to this surface

an outer layer removed, plastic as she can be,

and in places, becoming less defined ... a natural part of wearing in, as she is doing now, an imperceptible shift

without realising, she has oriented to the light again, like a sparrow trapped in this place that she chose, confused by glass

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it always felt like the end of something

beside laminate

She has to make herself *stain resistant*[5],

Right here, she's making herself write here, because it counts as a subject for her research project, because you could define this as a ~~non~~place[2]. Earlier in these studies, she learnt that that word *define* holds the Latin word *finis*, *boundary*, at its end[3]. Etymology presses on her, changes the shape of words on her tongue. Maybe that old job has something to do with it, the one with the dictionaries.

a good choice for unforgiving environments[6],

specific gravity[7] /

high pressure to *minimise signs of wear and tear*[8]

It always felt like the end of something immersed all the time

Now, she must look like she's writing on the surface. She makes inscriptions like this, scratching over and over until these words form as carvings, upright, at the very limit to which the ink could flow. It's breaking a rule, maybe, to write like this here. She must look like she's writing on the surface. It's breaking a role, too – in rooms like this, waiting has its requisite poses, which her body refuses to take, though she waits, too obliquely.

without internalising anything, including her own

dust

paper

Remember you must leave. Ali Smith, *Hotel World*[4]. The vowels that shift sideways with the author's signature wordplay – echolalic for her now, in moments like this, thinking of leaving. Something about being an editor – the control of it. Firm grip on the line. Fear of the slippage. *Remainder you mist leaf.*

layers

non-porous and easy to clean[9]

behind the resign

you

still here

(never really touching)

Spelling errors were rare for her before that job – the job with the dictionaries – but then she had to learn phonics. For months back then, the vibrations of each word, walking around clicking, hissing, ahing; trying to observe herself in the midst of it; to-day / tuh-day / too-day. Typos, too, a sign of struggle. Then on the phone to her mother – that reminder – *you tried to speak in whole sentences, you wanted to express yourself more than your body would let you.*

Remainder that?

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in the dark.

She is

	above	vinyl		
She is in the dark. writing				
Like everything she's done here, this is an accident. She planned to write here, put the materials in her bag, knowing this place would have that <i>ambiance</i> . But that time passed and this dark arrived. Now she writes by touch, dragging the pen along the page, afraid to lift it into this kind of air. Nearby, they watch, too, sing along with that song, the one you often hear.	flat	off	off	
	as	cold	air	touches
			wisps of others	
Ambiance was not her word choice when she started trying to articulate []. At first, she kept saying <i>atmosphere</i> , but she resented how it reminded her of that distant place she might be writing towards, and those certain kinds of adjectives that would precede it, <i>one day</i> and <i>the next</i> , a smooth layering, a neutralisation, the way places like that would draw them in.	catching			on,
	bits	of		her
	nothing	smooth,		like
kind of familiar	wood	grain,	décor	film,
Meanwhile, she was drawn to <i>tone</i> , and the knots of meaning Sofia Samatar and Kate Zambreno had for it in their beautiful eponymous book[10], the one with lighted windows, but it bothered her that other discussions of literary tone kept calling back to the writer's attitude, when she knew that the authors meant <i>tone</i> as in <i>vibration</i> as in <i>vibes</i> .	(behind	polyvinyl		chloride)
	still	soft	and	reflective
	behind	polyvinyl		chloride
The way people would gesture from their shoulders when they said <i>vibes</i> (<i>no plot, just vibes!</i>), as though the word could only be said with a shrug (even while being felt deep in the chest, or perhaps sometimes up in the throat). A movement that could also signify, <i>oh, it's nothing</i> .	wood	grain,	décor	film,
	nothing	smooth,		like
	bits	of		her
So, <i>ambiance</i> , a word given to her. <i>The nothing that is</i> , Travis Matteson says, via another poet [11], in a paper she will read later, as those lights and sounds catch on her, as they often do.	catching			on,
They were speaking, not writing, when her supervisor first suggested this word; she didn't know if she meant it in the sense of <i>going around</i> (e) or <i>the feeling of an arrangement</i> (a).	wisps	of	others	
	as	cold	air	touches
One sound requires more openness, but this is a difficult thing to notice in the moment. But she had a strong urge, then, to resist clarifying [12]. To stay longer with what entangles here.	on		and	on
It reminds her of that other story, the one where you find yourself between layers,				
in the interstices you were not meant to see				
Either (a) this story really happened, or (e) it was a strangely detailed dream, in which new spaces opened up beneath this sleeping body, absorbing just part of the material, that part that could have made all this feel familiar,				
leaving the rest like gaps between storeys,				

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[empty]

versus LEDs

A pattern: Arcs, bubbles in the places where her wrist rests. Negatives of these literary efforts

entering

It is always hardest to write this close. She can't maintain traction here, too much of her

this figure turns, turns again

reaches near ninety degrees

suspended in air.

turns and turns and turns again

red-green-blue, efficient burn

fabric an improvised barrier

She hesitates at the blankness she is trying to fill –

inside out

below this shining heat-sink

It feels –

twist elbows, fingers angled

ink droplets in pores

she withdraws.

and that figure leaking water

less than can be seen or felt

exiting

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room tone

Notes

- [1] Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. Taylor & Francis. (This refers to Butler's use of J. L. Austin's speech act theory.)
- [2] Augé, M. (2009). *Non-places: An introduction to supermodernity*. Verso Books.
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<https://www.etymonline.com/word/define>
- [4] Smith, A. (2001). *Hotel world*. Penguin.
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- [6] Laminex (n.d.).
- [7] Laminex (2015). *Laminex multipurpose compact laminate*.
<https://www.laminex.com.au/medias/Laminex-Multipurpose-Compact-Laminate-TDS.pdf?context=bWFzdGVyfGRvY3VtZW50c3w0NTc1MTV8YXBwbGljYXRpb24vcGRmfGFESXhMMmcwWIM4NE9EZzNPREV6T0RrNE1qY3dMMHhoYltdsdVpYZ2dUWFZzZEdsd2RYSndiM05sSUVOdmJYQmhZM1FnVEdGdGFjXWVhR1VnVkVSVExuQmtaZ3w2NWY5M2I1ZTVIM2ZiOWIwZTY3OWFkNjdIMzQ1OTVjMGIxMDQzNTFkN2RjNTRjY2YzNDE1YWE0MzM5Y2VkZWZWM3>
- [8] Laminex (n.d.).
- [9] Laminex (n.d.).
- [10] Samatar, S. & Zambreno, K. (2023). *Tone*. Columbia University Press.
- [11] Matteson, T. (2022). Ambience. *Environmental Humanities*, 14(3), 571–574.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-9962871>. Matteson uses this phrase 'the nothing that is' via a reference to a Wallace Stevens poem.
- [12] Manning, E. & Steenholdt Heiredal, T. (2024). Exploring autistic perception in architecture. *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 28(1), 79–87.
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