

(From the Spanish version of Michel Butor's letter)

You, whoever you might be,

If I had placed your name at the head of this blank page, surely I would have known you for quite some time, and thus, as these lines would develop, flashes of your semblance would come to me, the sound of your voice, memories of past moments together, perhaps from a distant childhood, discoveries we had in common, readings, travels.

If I had written your name, of course, preceded with the well known formula: Mr., Mrs., or Miss (this last form now in disuse), I would most certainly have used the polite (*vous*) form, which to be sure, I am accustomed to using with many of my friends, even the oldest and dearest, since the step from respect to camaraderie was never taken, something which I often regret but which takes nothing away from the relationship.

On the other hand it has happened that I will use the familiar (*tu*) form in letters to persons I have never seen but with whom I have worked from a distance.

If this letter gets to you, who I am addressing as *vous*, it will serve to uncover, through our continuing dialogues, who knows what unplumbed depths, gold mines or perhaps mines of salt that some day will shine in the open air.

I certainly do not yet know you, nor have I even received a letter from you (in answer to those humiliating requests that we are often subjected to, whether dealing with you or my known or unknown correspondents), and I imagine a face, a voice in expectation of comprehension over the vast and frozen expanses of foolishness and deafness, misfortune and lost opportunities, vast spaces into which I hurl this message in a bottle.

Michel Butor