





## Preface

I am a writer and radio producer, a publisher and also a teacher at ArtEZ Creative Writing. My focus in my teaching is primarily transmedia and interdisciplinary projects. In a way, I am always thinking about translations of one kind or another. My first two publications are volumes of poetry so for all intents and purposes, I am a poet. In my poetry I tend to borrow phrases and ideas from pop music and comic books. It's translation. After publishing the first volume I did a small-scale festival tour with a band, a vj and a rapper. My goal was to mix poetry and song, not just to read poems over instrumentals. After the second volume I wrote and played in a theatrical production alongside Orgel Vreten (a band with two Hammond organs at its centre). The goal I set myself this time was to envision the whole show as a long poem for several voices and instruments. Currently I am working on a novel in which I try to do the same.

The same goes for radio. After learning the basics of audio and editing I am now looking for ways to translate poetical values to radio

pieces. For instance: poetry for me is, and this is not an original idea, always in the first place about form. A lot of times I can intuit how a poem will look on the page or sound rhythmically on a stage before I even write a single sentence of the thing. So in one of my earlier radio documentaries I focused on form. I interviewed a singer/songwriter who had written this song describing a walk through his stomping grounds. I asked him to take me on that walk, I took a microphone. The turns and terrain of that walk became the structure for the documentary.

Like how for someone with a hammer everything looks like a nail, everything to me looks like translation. When I read about the hijacking of storytelling I am thinking of translation. To me, Lewis Wallace's piece about objectivity<sup>1</sup> in journalism read like a translation: it's not a farewell to objectivity as it is an introduction of point of view to journalism.

Every discipline, from fine arts to journalism to marketing, has been

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace's piece was on the reading list for the workshop: <http://medium.com/@lewispants/objectivity-is-dead-and-im-okay-with-it-7fd2b4b5c58f>

stealing, or rather translating, key concepts from fiction for their own use. And frankly: I really don't care. In fact, I encourage it. Instead of desperately protecting what is 'ours', we should be stealing and translating too. Let's not narrow down what is the domain of fiction and what is not, let's broaden our idea of fiction, and see what the world around us has to offer. And that is what I wanted to do in this workshop.

The workshop consisted of these three assignments:

1. Choose two key values from your own line of work or interests that relate to your idea of fiction. These can be abstract values like 'diversity' and 'ambiguity' but also techniques like 'plot' or even 'dialogue'. They should be values you hold so dear that you are unable to say which one matters most to you. Write a brief (3 or 4 lines) explanation of your choices.

2. Now choose one value

anyway: which one is the most important of the two? Write the other one a friendly and honest rejection letter, explaining in detail why it didn't make the cut.

3. From a different field than your own, but one that has your interest, pick a value which you would want to introduce to fiction writing. For example: 'immersiveness' from the field of game design or 'objectivity' from journalism. Go wild, anything goes. Once you've picked one, write a letter of recommendation addressed to 'Fiction' in which you explain why we should introduce this value to it.

The idea was to, firstly, end up with a set of values which we don't discuss. These are the values that got neither a rejection nor recommendation. You will find these only on the photos in between the letters. The second set of values are values we believe to be important but when confronted to

choose, are able to reject, allowing us to see the flip side of those values and, maybe more importantly, show self-doubt. Lastly, the fun part, we end up with a set of propositions for introducing new values to fiction.

The best part is: I didn't have to write any of these. Instead the participants of the post-truth fiction workshops did. A total of 25 writers, academics, graphic designers, artists, computer programmers, journalists and everyone in between from Europe, Asia and the United States were divided into three groups and confronted with these assignments and wrote the letters contained in this zine. They are the true artists here and these are their names (in order of appearance):

Jozien Wijkhuijs, Elske van Lonkhuyzen, Yvonne Zeegers, Gui Machiavelli, Ananda Serné, Pepe Montero, Monique Grimord, Helena Hoogenkamp, Simone Atangana Bekono, Nikki Dekker, Harris Bin Munawar, Joaquín Rolón, Maarten van der Graaff, Karin Mientjes, Jantine Wijnja, Emilio Moreno, Kaya Erdinç, Niels 't Hooft, Daniel Montoya, Richard Leppard, Esmé van den Boom,

Xiaofeng Dai, Lisa Weeda & Sytske van Koeveringe.

Their letters surpassed my expectations in so many ways and I am very happy to have them here for you to read.

One last note: please keep in mind that most of our correspondents here were writing in a language that is not their own and given the tight production schedule of this zine, there was no way to edit or spellcheck them all (although this introduction was checked by Laurens van de Linde, thanks Laurens). What you read here is what came straight out of the workshops.

Dennis Gaens

~~TRUTH~~ SILENCE

STRUCTURE

~~CONSTRUCTION~~ PLAY

SURPRISE

ASSOCIATION

~~JOY~~ SCIENCE THEORY

FANTASY

~~THOUGHT~~ ASTEROIDS

FRAME OF REFERENCE

~~ALTERATION~~ WEATHER REPORT

~~LIES~~ WANDERING

ENCHANTMENT

~~FICTION AS POLITICAL~~ DEVICE

INTERVENTION OBJECTS

**Dear Truth,**

After long consideration, I am sorry to inform you that you are not included in the set of concepts we will use to describe fiction from now on. I do see the value that you could have to the conversation about it, as well as to the understanding of fiction. After all, that is why I included you. I feel like the closest I can come to truth is through fiction.

However, I have come to the conclusion that adding you to this list suggests that there is such a thing as a fixed truth. It would push people to valuing one understanding of a work of fiction more than valuing another, and it would also suggest that some elements of a work are more factual or 'true' than others, hence creating an undesirable hierarchy. Within the world, people's truth is the cause of many problems, violence and destruction, and we should not want to infect fiction with that.

On top of that, the statement that there is a truth to be found in between the words and lines of a work of fiction will encourage people to look for it and with that, they will miss

out on other important things that fiction could bring them. For example, joy, beauty and, maybe even more importantly, doubt. In most other spaces in the world, truth has an almost untouchable status. That is why people who live in those spaces, which means everybody, will have the natural, involuntary tendency to go look for a truth they can latch on to within a work of fiction. I am not comfortable with taking that risk.

Thank you for your interest and good luck in your future endeavours,

Yours sincerely,

Jozien Wijkhuijs

**Dear Fiction,**

I write you this letter to introduce you to Silence and to ask you to give it a more permanent place in how you define yourself. Personally, I hate Silence. I have had some very bad experiences with them and a big part of me wants to write you a letter about how you should always, always be as noisy and room-filling as you can

be, and in the process I want to make a lot of noise myself and maybe even knock over some chairs. But I won't. I came to the conclusion that, much like in the art of fishing, coincidentally something I am very bad at, Silence can be of great value to you.

There is much to say about the role of Fiction in our modern society, but I think that one of the things we can be sure of is that it brings some quiet into our ever-raging surroundings. I know that most blurbs on the brightly colored book covers in our book stores usually include the words 'riveting' and 'exciting', or even 'fizzing', but why should they always? Surely there will be some books that are praised for their silent nature, but I think we need more of those. Fiction can, for people like me, be a space where you can just silence the voices around and within you, especially when it creates a world but does not take you by the hand and guide you through it. It can be like a room with no furniture and walls in a color that is not too bright, where you can just be in for a while, until the worst part of the storm outside is over. I am not here to tell you how to do that, but to ask you to take Silence into consideration. Even if it means

that I would have to force myself a little bit harder to engage with you if you do so.

Thanks,

Jozien Wijkhuijs

### **Dear Construction,**

A building is a construction. The chair I am sitting on right now is a construction. The bus I drove in this morning to get here is a construction. My family is a construction (though not construed by anyone in particular). This city is a construction. The sandwich I just ate was a very nice construction of humous, sliced chicken, cheese and cucumber.

They were not fiction.

Fiction is construction but not all construction is fiction.

When I fell in love for the first time, that was a surprise. When this person (Timothy Loyer, seven years old) did not love me back, that was a surprise. When at age 22 someone finally did love me back, that was a



great surprise. When a riksja driver in Kolkata, India, charged me less for a ride than we had previously agreed upon, that was a surprise. I had to adjust my idea of Indian riksja drivers. I've often had to adjust my idea of love or anything else.

Good fiction, to me, is surprising. A surprise, to me, always feels like fiction at first. And even though not all surprises are fiction, they will beat a construction almost every time.

Sincerely yours,

Elske

P.S. You must be pleased that this letter is a construction.

### **Dear Fiction,**

I would like to introduce you to sweat. To sweat, voices bouncing off the walls and arguments about who pushed who. I'd like to introduce you to cheering, clapping, eating chips on the sideline and changing players every few minutes. To strategy, a new strategy and then another strategy. To

white, red, yellow, black and blue lines on the floor that mean something different depending on the ball you're using.

I recommend having a ball. It gives you something to chase, to cherish and lose. I recommend losing, it'll keep you modest. I recommend winning, it'll give you courage. I recommend resting, exploding, getting out of breath, twisting an ankle and rinsing it under cold water in a smelly shower. I recommend taking a shower with others and noticing how every body is different and no body is ugly. I recommend having a few rules and a little risk. Then play.

Yours sincerely,

Elske

### **Dear Joy,**

I think I miss you, but I am not sure where we lost each other. So, this letter will be an exploration about how we got divided. Correct me if I am wrong, although you never cared about my lies before.

I don't think I need much space in the world, but somehow I felt oppressed by people who wanted to do the same as me. It felt like my world was intervened by so much reality that I couldn't refigure it anymore. I pushed you out of my system, while still expressing myself. I search for a new place to live, but I have the feeling it is not enough.

Can I intervene too? Should I take a political standpoint in this intervention, am I a power now? I think I want you back and just write. You are here sometimes. Maybe that is enough. A longing for you to come by.

I am sorry that I sound so confused, but I believe it will turn out fine eventually. Let's not say that we've changed. I will try to stay faithful.

Goodbye for now,

Fiction

**Dear Fiction,**

I think I like you. I am an historian, I am a scientist, I love sci-fi. Maybe I

am just searching for a timeless space. A wish that nothing is an end.

I often think theory contaminated me with a virus of overthinking. Theories of time and being. Of non-confirming. Refusing nature. Everything is culture. The truth is not out there. Reality is dead.

But maybe we can make a deal. If you can shape new realities and if I can offer you some concepts to work with, we can create together sometimes. At least I've used you. I used your imagination.

I would love to work together now and then. Theory is a possibility. Together we can start an endless travel of becoming something new or nothing.

Science is truth, Science is fiction, fiction is truth.

See you soon!

**Dear thinking,**

I am writing to inform you we were unable to accept your application into fiction, having decided instead to fill your spot with fantasy.

The reasoning behind this decision is that, as much as thinking might be useful to see through the veil of ideas, metaphors and imagination, it can only gets us so far. Thinking goes inwards in circles of ever-increasing complexity and, whilst we might find joy and enlightenment there, we can just as easily be lead to a barren landscape of unrealised and unimagined hypotheses. I would never deny your objective deconstruction is essential at times; now, however, is not one of those periods in history.

We have sent our ideas and utopias into reality and saw them being cut down and disemboweled in front of us. You have tried to strengthen them, to heal and adapt them to a world that seems resolute in resisting change. But it is time that they get their due rest and give way to new visions of the future, ways of being and ideals and that is something that you, thinking, cannot do. We both know that is fantasy's task.

So allow it to build its castles out of thin air for now. Time will come when we will need your help to fortify them and see if they do cut through our

fear-stricken society into other ways of being.

xoxo

g m

### **Dear fiction,**

I am writing to introduce you to some very exciting friends of mine: asteroids. In these trying times that we've all been going through, I believe you would appreciate getting more acquainted with these pieces of rock that populate our solar system.

Caught up orbiting the same star as you, dear fiction, these millions of minor planets spin endlessly and aimlessly around a big ball of fire. Just like you, their existence is just the result of the conflict between things much bigger than themselves; nothing less, nothing more. Also just like you, their existence scares some people and excites others.

But, in this sea of similarities, there is something asteroids could teach you. Every now and then, they crash against a planet. And that's

the moment in which they really shine, bringing the blissful havoc of destruction (which, I'm sure you aware of, is just another name for change). Imagine all asteroids would one day break free from their orbital shackles and just decide to congregate and dish out their blessings against one planet. Imagine chaos raining down against its surface, changing it forever in the most unpredictable ways.

Because, you see, this change and this destruction are in the end just a monumental sowing of seeds of possibility. Doesn't this excite you? Imagine having that power, that effect and then seeing the results of your heavy-handed intervention! Don't be nervous, I'm sure you are more than ready for the responsibility.

So, this is it. Fiction, take asteroids out for a coffee, a dinner, perhaps a walk in the park. Talk to it with an open heart. I'm sure you'll soon agree with me that asteroids are exactly what you need in your life right now.

xxx,

### **Dear Alteration,**

I unfortunately don't function well under time-pressure. The reason for excluding you from my definition of fiction has more to do with my current mood than with reasoning. You were the second word that popped up in my mind when I thought of the word 'fiction', I hope that you will be faster next time, so that you will end up first.

This might make you upset, it is after all never easy to be rejected, I will therefore make up another reason why I excluded you, and hope you can live in peace with that. This reason is that you are simply less interesting to reflect upon than the first word. To me, 'fiction' and 'alteration' come hand in hand, whereas 'fiction' and 'frame of reference' leave more space for wonder and discussion. I am fascinated by the idea of someone telling a story based on lived experience and that there will be people who don't believe that this story actually happened, because it is too far removed from their own experiences, their comfort-zone or their way of living. To them, the person telling this story is lying.

## **Dear Fiction,**

As I was thinking of a value to recommend to you, I opened my internet-browser and looked at the eight websites that I visit most frequently. Among them are my email, the website of The Guardian, a link to my online banking account, but also yr.no: the website of the Norwegian meteorological institute. (I like to be prepared after all.) I find this page more interesting than its Dutch equivalent. You will of course find weather reports for the mainland of Norway, but it also has a section called 'polar regions' and another one called 'sea and oil'. I press on 'oilplatforms' and see that at Ecofish 1 it will be cloudy and that they can expect rain at Ecofish 2. Without paying much attention to it, I learn the words 'rain' and 'cloud' in Norwegian.

While listening to the radio in another language than my mother tongue, I am increasingly aware of how attached I have become to certain familiar patterns in a language that I do not fully understand. The weather forecast forms an accessible way to

become acquainted with a foreign language.

Fiction, I would enjoy it if you were to investigate different weather reports as an approach to composing a narrative. In this way, the forecast could function as the chorus in Greek theatre, commenting on the events that take place in the story. This would create friction between the feeling of being prepared and at ease, and the feeling of surprise, of letting go of control.

## **Dear Lies,**

We reject your application to be included into the definition of fiction because you are basically a pleonasm, a redundant expression to encapsulate such concept. Fiction, by definition, is a series of lies underneath which essential truths lay dormant waiting to be discovered. It is truth, essential truths, what's really more important in fiction. The lies are just a mechanism through which these essential truths are delivered, the Trojan horses through which essential truths conquer our imagination.

However, more important than lies or truths are the enchantment mechanisms that distract the readers into thinking that the lies that hold inside essential truths are indeed factual when they're not. It's not enough to lie in order to create fiction and tell a story about the essential values in life, but the artist needs to do it in a convincing way, by enchanting and mesmerizing, in order for the reader to believe that the Trojan horse presented is actually a gift and not a weapon in disguise.

In fact, the same applies to fiction and non-fiction. While both fiction and nonfiction are opposite ways of conveying essential truths (fiction disguises them as lies whereas nonfiction exposes them as facts), both of them need these enchantment mechanisms (narrative techniques) to mesmerize the reader and make them forget what authors are trying to do, allowing them to be agents of change in the subconscious of the reader. Without these enchantment mechanisms, storytelling couldn't exist, and if storytelling didn't exist, there would be no fiction (or for that matter, nonfiction) to speak about.

Thank you very much for your application and I hope the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Pepe Montero

**Dear Fiction (with a capital "F"),**

Hereby I'm writing you a letter of recommendation to consider the value of wandering into your repertoire.

I think sometimes you're too rigid, too structured, and that cuts into your spontaneity and sense of wonder. You tend to value plot (going to a place, one that makes sense and conveys meaning) as a mechanism above any other one in your toolbox, but it doesn't have to be that way.

People say "not all who wander are lost", and that's true for you as well. I really think that if you allowed yourself to wander a little bit off the beaten path, to roam freely, aimlessly, deviating from your rigid conscious goals, you could find yourself in a place where you learn more about

what you want to say, the essential truth you want to convey, than if you focused on fabricating this with a laser-focused intent.

Having this liberty to explore, to ramble without a purpose or an objective, is an enriching experience in itself. As you have tried suggesting to us numerous times with your storytelling powers, usually this meandering path, and what you learn from it, is more important than the destination itself.

Forget about plot. Give yourself a chance to wander, to get lost every once in a while, so that you allow yourself to discover values that you never thought were of interest to you. Stop along the way, chat with whomever crosses your path, and accept their hospitality and generosity. Go places you never thought you were interested in going before. Who knows, if you do this you might learn more than you bargained for when you started your journey. And you will change, for better or for worse...

Thanks for your consideration.

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With wandering respect,

Pepe Montero

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**Dear Concept #1 (Political Device),**

I regret to say I will not be choosing you. This is because you put me in a provocative space (which usually is a good thing) but you require me to take a stand and stick with a rigid belief which I will then have to preach to others. I mean, a rigid political belief, something that in the end could easily turn into oppression. I would prefer to be flexible, and for this reason, I am choosing the other candidate (Intervention), where exploration, indecisiveness, and uncertainty is allowed.

Thank you anyway,  
Monique

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**Dear Fiction,**

I would like to recommend Objects to your repertoire. They have so much to tell, whole secret lives that you could

imagine. We can't truly know the lives of seemingly non-sentient things, however thinking about it can create some excellent metaphors and story arcs.

Objects have become a pretty big stakeholder in the world. They are almost on the same hierarchical plane as humans. Corporations are even counted as humans in some countries, and others are thinking of granting forests civil rights. A screenplay was recently written by an A.I., and a handful of algorithms recently determined the president of the United States.

Objects use Fiction all the time, as a method of innovation, salesmanship, and critique. But to be truthful, I can't think of any excellent examples where Fiction has included Objects, I mean as a round and cathartic character. I wouldn't let this stay one-sided for too long. It seems like a great place for you to start capitalizing, especially as Objects are increasingly having lives of their own, and increasing in power, on broader scales.

If you want to stay as relevant as you are now, I would really put some

thought toward Objects. Pay them some homage. They could be the next leaders.

Best,  
Monique





PLOT

~~REALITY~~ WEIRDNESS

CONCEPTUAL (EXPERIMENT)

~~ACTIVISM~~ UPKOLSTERING

INTIMATE

~~POLITICAL~~ - SALSA

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

~~HUMOR~~ - PLEASURE

~~HUMOR~~ - FRUSTRATION

COMMON IDENTITY

RHYTHM

~~SUDDEN ESSAYISM~~ - AUTOPILOT  
(A.O.)

~~CONCEPT~~ - BE A NOMAD

DETAIL

DISCOMFORT

~~INVITATION~~ - OPEN SOURCE

ASSOCIATIVE LAYERING

~~ESSAYISTIC INTIMACY~~ - SAND CASTLE  
MAKING

CAREFULLNESS

~~ATTENTION SPENDING~~ - WINGSPAN

**Dear reality,**

I'm rejecting you in favour of plot.  
I'm wearing a watch right now that reads 1:10 on Wednesday the 18th. That has nothing to do with the actual time or date, but my out of control-watch is not affecting the structure of time. I have the feeling that reality doesn't care if I believe in it or not, so it won't be hurt by my rejection. Plot, on the other hand, needs me. Plot is a thought up life-form that constantly is being scrutinized for being not more like reality. 'It had too much plot,' we tend to say, which is like saying: Something is overstructured. When I need lack of structure, I look at reality.

When you slice up life to give it some form of narrative, you're excluding the things that don't fit that narrative. Plot is a weak attempt to take parts of reality and structure them in a meaningful way. It's like looking around the corner of reality, fitting explanations in the empty spaces. I love the Sisyphus-character of that attempt. Creating little islands inside reality that have new laws, a structured way in which things are presented, filled up with meaning. I like the way plot presents to us the

idea that everything has a reason, when we are clearly living in a world devoid of such structured laws, this sense of meaning. The longing with which we grasp and hold onto plot makes me think that we need it. People who on the other hand crave more reality, are craving most of the time something they perceive as 'the rawness of life.' They visit this raw life as tourists, able to get back home when reality gets to real.

Reality, I'm not sure if I'm still rejecting you at this point, or writing a love-letter on your omnipresence. Anyway, I love the underdog. And plot seems to me weaker than reality. Reality is like a parent that you can yell at that you hate him or her, but you can still live in it's house.

Best,

Helena

**Dear fiction,**

I would recommend toeclippings in pots of plants. They contain universes.  
I'm just kidding. I wanted to

make an example of what I'm recommending, but I don't know what it's called. It has something to do with incorporating the weird, without trying to tame it. When we encounter weirdness, we try to relate the experience to movies we have seen, characters we know. You're like Carrie from Sex in the City, you're like that manie pixie dream girl from that 500 days of Summer-movie, you're like Jimi Hendrix. Please fit into my imagination.

Behind the face of every person you encounter is a tunnel. In that deep void behind this person's eyes is experience and memory and things I can't fathom. But here I am, trying to make this person into a concept that I can relate to. It gives me power over this person. I would like to recommend to myself to accept the multitude of things that are going on in other people and their lives. And to accept that my weird isn't your weird.

Have you ever noticed how people, as a compliment say that something is 'like poetry,' but don't read that much actual poetry? I would also like to use this space to recommend poetry. Accept that it disappoints you, because you already had a

concept of poetry that has little to do with what is happening in poetry right now. Maybe I'm also endorsing disappointment.

Last but not least, I recommend listening to people you don't agree with. When they finish talking, you wait seven seconds to think about what they're saying. Listening to is not the same as agreeing with. But it seems harder to listen to opinions you radically differ from. See this as a muscle you must train. Don't approach other people's opinions with the fear they will consume you.

Love,  
Helena

### **Dear activism,**

What's good? I was thinking I should write something official, but it's you and who am I fucking kidding so here we go.

So, I know you and I have had a wild fucking ride. Channeling anger, crying a lot, we watched a lot of youtube videos of people giving speeches and then getting really energetic about

it, rambling about music albums and Khalil Abdul Muhammad speeches, Frantz Fanon's theory and Audre Lorde poems. We'd do this in bed or over beers or at family gatherings to, well, anybody that dared to mention a Kendrick Lamar album. That particular tendency was mostly awkward, but overall it's been fun. As, I said: wild, but fun. Sometimes even sweet.

Thing is though, that I feel like there's something going on between us that neither of us have discussed and if I won't discuss it, I'm sure you definitely won't. Because you're not necessarily a part of me. No, let me rephrase: You're not necessarily a part of my writing. You've helped me as a human being, changed me, understood me, confused the living hell out of me, fuelled rage but also connected me to things I might have never come across hadn't I found you: art, histories, different world views and people that I thought were different but turned out to be the same. But it's just that I think, and this might be really fucking disrespectful to say, that I can do without you as an essential part of my texts. Is that...??? Problematic?!?!?!?

I'm shaking even writing this down, a part of me is running laps in my brain trying to wake the lobes of my brain the fuck up about what my fingers are doing right now. I just feel like I might be more than an activist writer. Is that offensive? Knowing you, it probably is, but it's how I feel. I might just... be a writer. Don't get angry. Sit down. Okay stay standing, I know what happens when people tell you to sit down

There's conceptual experimentation, you know. It gives makers the freedom to not speak their mind about political realities, but convey their danger, wrongness, inherent evil by projecting it, letting it transcend or simply exist. I'm talking about artistry in a form that I find most attractive: searching for new ways to let the structures disappear and life bubble up to the surface, even if it's just for a second. Art can contain activism, can be radical, but it's never just that. It's never a goal but simply by existing, being written, performed, participated in it can contain the tools to activate people into changing discourses and eventually lives. I'm afraid that if you, activism, are the primary goal of my writing, I can't set my work free,

and in that sense, turning you into a container, perhaps even an oppressor, and what the hell do we do then?

Hope you understand, we'll probably cross paths.

Best and good luck to you,  
Simone

### **Dear fiction,**

You probably think: what's she doing sending a recommendation letter when she hasn't sat down and opened her latest project in months. Well, I'm here, and you're going to hear me out. Have you heard about the great art of upholstering? My dad did it for a living and I've watched him work and I swear it's awesome.

Don't start thinking about why I chose upholstering and the relation of my dad having done it most part of his life. No time to psycho-analyze this shit. I just told activism to fuck off out of my work so I'm sensitive and in no state to defend myself.

But upholstering. Man, have you seen upholsterers at work? It's... should I call it magic? Should I call it magical

practicality? Is that a thing? If it is, it's what I think upholstering could bring to the table in terms of redefining you, and this is why.

Like, did you know that there's furniture out there, standing in people's living rooms that have not been touched by an upholsterer after production and sale even once? There's actually chairs out there that have existed for almost a hundred years and all they show is a slight amount of wear due to old age, holes from cigarette butts, stains from dropped plates of pasta, but that's it.

So, when my dad used to upholster old chairs he used to go to shops and look at all these different types of materials and fabrics that would turn metal frames and wooden construction into design. There was an art to it. He'd smoke a cigarette, smell leather, argue about the combination of fabric and framework with shopkeepers and then make chairs, couches, padded stools, beds, whatever you wanted. He'd get wild, he'd upholster furniture using five different kinds of materials, curse at sewing machines, break wood and all that stuff craftsman do, while playing loud reggae in the garage. And it had nothing to do with these grand

philosophies, sometimes not even about aesthetics. It was about taking time to make things feel right. Could you imagine? Not just doing things because they feel right, but working hard as hell to make it feel right, make it fit, make it feel so right that you forget it's there.

Fiction maybe needs some of that magical practicality. Upholstering is a craft that also uses concepts, theories, technicalities and all those things as tools before actually just putting things together. And then when furniture is produced, reproduced, patched up and reconstructed, and this is wild, you're gonna panic, the upholsterers SIT on it. They sit on their shit and do other shit. They sell it sometimes, sure, but they actually want you to sit on it and forget it's there. They want you to forget what they made. That's their job. I'm not sure yet where this is going. Maybe I'm trying to be philosophical about upholstering. But magical practicality. Think about it.

Making fiction to be used, right and fitting so well you forget it's there, that it's fiction. Isn't that something we might be able to use? We might need?

Maybe not.

Best,  
Simone

**Dear politics,**

I (I have to confess, at first I wrote 'we', but this is a lie, there is no we in this practice, unless we're talking about the various thoughts and feelings and wants and mistakes I host inside, then naturally, yes, but coming to the point of responsibility, it's me, only me, who has to make this call (it will not do to point to some sort of authority forcing me to make a decision; the decision is forced, but the decision is made, and I am the maker, I know this, why do you think I keep writing 'I' in this pitiful way) and it is me who does it) **regret** (and I really do, don't for one second believe that I wanted to make this call, I couldn't) **to** (to you, to me, to the space between us, to the point) **inform** (not that this is information, it's hardly something you'll find in a book or on Wikipedia, but then again: it's something I know which you – ) **you** ( – you yet have to learn) **that**

(this) **I** (we) **have** (did you know in Spanish there's two different words for this verb? I've been wanting to tell you this since forever ago, but somehow never found the time) **decided** (perhaps it's not so much forgetfulness, as uncertainty) **to** (this or that word, what does it matter?) **go** (dear politics please do not ever let me return to the precocious teen I was, smoking weed, playing word games, thinking myself so fucking smart) **with** (I haven't even made it through this letter and I already miss you) **a different** (in the end, we're more similar than we're different, but this similarity lies in our tendency to look for difference, so what the fuck does that help, you know? you know) **value** (because that is the question, for me at least, and I think for you as well: what do I value in this life; is it the world in its splendid array of enticement or the turning away of that, finding your own way through it, without it, alone? (I guess this is for you (and me (for us? ( ))) to find out).)

Nikki

## To Whomever It May Concern,

When I was a first year student in Amsterdam, some classmate, mistaking me for the stereotype of an intellectual, invited me along to a night of jazz at Canvas, when it was still on the eleventh floor of the old postal building near the central station.

I don't like jazz. Too many noises, too little structure. It winks like a stranger at a bar (I am not generally one for strangers, neither for bars), it seems to want something from me, but never specifies what exactly.

But I was jealous, that evening; watching the amateur musicians step on and off stage, follow an inherent sense of rhythm which is still painfully foreign to me, add their own melody to a song and thereby changing it. I am the kind of person who thinks through conversations after they have happened. Improvisation baffles me.

Whether its jazz musicians or comedians, the act of responding in the moment, creating something new without thinking about it beforehand nor reflecting on it afterwards, fills



me with envy and awe. I could never do that. You probably couldn't, either. It's against our nature.

Then again, we're culture. We thwart expectations. So, if you're free, next Tuesday, come and dance salsa with me. Don't feel like you have to, but think it over, will you?

The thing about salsa is that it's not all that different from walking. One step backward, one step forward, 8 seconds. The basics are learned in fifteen minutes, and from there it's off the cuff. Backward, forward, backward, forward. That's all it wants: no winks, just a hand in a hand, and for you to keep moving.

You don't need to be funny, you don't need to have a sense of rhythm, you don't need to know what you're doing at all. Just follow: forward, backward, forward, backward, and then, if you don't think, if you feel, turn, swing, dive, fall.

See you there,

Nikki

**From: fiction**

**To: humor**

**Subject: re: but we were having fun :(**

I'm done with you, Humor, you bitter, lonely, contemptuous, arrogant, smug, self righteous piece of shit! I don't know how a girl like me fell in love with an asshole like you. You have ruined me and it's not even funny. No, we were not having fun on Facebook. Admit it, you're angry and you fake it. Admit it, nobody is jealous of us, everybody hates our guts. You're miserable and you make others miserable and you've made me miserable too.

You've got balls to claim in your email that you have no hard feelings, you fucktard. The only hard thing you have is your feelings.

And fuck you, you're not the best I can get. You are better than no one, asshole. You are a walking talking inferiority complex, a bigot without an ideology. you are an ugly pathetic fuckin loser.

I know I am just fiction, and I not perfect and I am struggling to make sense of the world and I really don't know where I will be in the next few years, but I am better than you. All I

had was meaning, and you took that away, you gutless soulless bully. I am better without you.

Fuck you.

- Fiction

**From: harris**

**To: Fiction**

**subject: omg seriously**

Story, my friend, sorry I've been meaning to write you for a long time, but I just haven't been able to sit myself down. How's it going?

So I know you're gonna say you don't wanna be with anyone funny after Humor, but seriously, you saw Pleasure where I work and you know you liked him. I think you should give it a shot. He is sensational, he makes you laugh and he's free, you'll be very pleased.

And yeah, no I promise you he's not like Humor. You're gonna get zero whining, he sees the joy in everything, once he got his car wrecked and he was enjoying the fact like the car looks like it's winking :) Unlike that weirdo who used to ridicule your friends and

got you fired by your last boss and made your friend cry, Pleasure really thrives in company. And unlike that egotistical son of a bitch you were dating, Pleasure is really loving and humble.

I swear he will make you laugh more deeply and freely than anyone has ever made you laugh before.

Just give it a try. Take a small start.

Find Pleasure on Facebook ;)

-Harris

**Dear Mr. Irony,**

We recognize that we informed you in the last email that the last step for your incorporation to the company was your final decision. We are very thankful for the enthusiasm you had expressed on your application and during the interview, among the fact that you had to flight from Chile to California to do it. We are also very impressed about your background and your high qualifications for the job you were applying.

But we are very sorry to notify you that the position you had apply to join to our research team is not available

anymore. This due to the new path we had decided to take in the last days as a company, in which we consider you unnecessary and incompatible. We know all the effort it meant for you the application process. As a retribution for that we will send you a gift card of 100 dollars that you can use in any of our stores inside the U.S. Please do not respond to this Email.

**Dear Ms. Fiction,**

I'm writing to you to recommend you Mr. Frustration.

I'm sure you believe that no one knows better about frustration than writers and specially poets. But I'm sorry to inform you that you are wrong.

I'm agree that there are thousands of writers and poets sunken in anonymity trying to survive in the middle of all kind frustration, like the frustration of not been recognized; of not be read by anyone, or the frustration of not getting to the idea that they wish for their creativity. But the frustration I'm recommending to you comes from another very different field. He is part of the daily

life of a scientist, and even when one some of them wins the Nobel price, is very probably that he would receive it surrounded by frustration of the project he is working it on that moment.

How can this guy can be an input to improve my company? I hear you asking. Well, because it will remember all the time, that there's one way to get to one point between thousands of wrong ways, and that probably you will need to try every one of them without any success. So, at the end he will allow you to realize that there's no satisfaction on getting to that point. That art starts to lose its sense when it starts to fill your expectations with satisfaction.

Regards,  
Ms. Science

**Dear members of the Sudden  
Essayist International,**

We have come a long way together and yes, some times were pretty hard. Others were among the best afternoons in my life, which is filled with afternoons that are

more of a disappointing nature. We all seemed to agree on the importance of what we were doing and that's probably how things should be. But now I have reached a point of no return:

Sudden Essayism is dead to me, beyond dead, more like a zombie that keeps showing up at my house when I try to write.

The zombie smells, drags itself forward, looking through my window, just looking at me, reminding me of the time I invented the term Sudden Essayism.

I could say I was going through a rough patch in those days, but there is no real excuse for conceptual sloppiness. When I met you, sisters and brothers, I felt like I found a family. We all wrote in different registers, mixing the lyrical, the intellectual and many other modes of expression. Our life became a poem, one in which I was constantly talking to friends at night, on the phone or in a bar, constantly agreeing with each other.

But then I became what I am today: the detached, snarky and smart-ass author and founder of the Sudden Essayist International.

Now I consider my days with you, our

endless talks, our performances and magazines, a distraction. I was unable to escape my own voice. The old voice of superior authority was replaced by yet another form of authority: the untouchability of the self-reflective subject, always situating itself, always aware of its limitations and is always 'just thinking out loud'.

Summary of all essays I have written as a Sudden Essayist:

'I was talking to this friend about X, while we watched a video of y, and I thought what if ....'

Nobody could touch me, because I used the intimacy of a voice, the everydayness of speech, as a way to escape responsibility.

I was only throwing stuff out there, right? I didn't make any claims? I was performing doubt, anxiety and self-criticism so you would love me, so you would think of me as radical.

What if I tried to make an actual argument for once, and not just put a quote by Deleuze right in the middle of a story about buying a sex toy in the town of my parents? What if I would just stick with one fucking thing for once? I know you don't like hearing this, but you are not as witty as you think you are.

I know you think it's a new and better kind of realism to combine everything with everything, but consider this: are you not just being sloppy?

Are you not behaving as if everything is there for you to take, grab and use? Spending time with one set of problems wouldn't hurt me and it would not hurt you either. Perhaps there are stories and ideas that are better off without this banal-and-at-the-same-time-intellectual-voice. So, I resign, comrades, I am no longer a member of SEI. And neither should you.

We are in serious need of real vulnerability.

Love always,

Maarten

**(Maarten didn't have time to type up his letter of recommendation, but if you ever meet him, ask him. He's doesn't suffer from a shortage of recommendations)**

**Dear Concept,**

We appreciate your interest in [being one of the important members of the construction of a narrative team] and the time you've invested in applying for the [main framework character] opening.

We ended up moving forward with another candidate, but we'd like to thank you for talking to our team and giving us the opportunity to learn about your skills and accomplishments. We were impressed with both your experience, background and the ideas you shared about what you could mean for an all-star narrative team.

It was an extremely competitive process, and we received hundreds of applications.

This was definitely a tough decision for us, as you were a solid candidate.

Please feel free to apply for open positions, for which you qualify in the future.

We wish you the best in your future endeavours!

Best,  
[Karin]

## Dear Fiction,

Be a nomad  
Change of scenery -  
Create a new surrounding -  
Travel to new surroundings -  
The journey is part of the appeal -  
be everywhere,  
be at one place  
look at your surroundings  
learn from it -  
Look at the surrounding as it is a film -  
look at it really -  
emerge yourself -  
look again without making  
judgements.  
Let the experience become part of you  
-  
go where no one goes - or just around  
the corner.  
sit on a bench for a day -  
take time  
take time to look at everything that is  
happening  
be observend -  
look at the details.  
look from a distance -  
look upclose.  
look into the virtual  
look into the real  
be an armchair traveller -  
or a digital nomad or all together  
or something inbetween

be your own kind of nomad.

with regards,

Karin

## Dear Invitation,

Unfortunately, I have to let you  
go. It has nothing to do with you;  
it is just that without Discomfort  
to accompany you, you become  
very shallow. A red carpet leading  
nowhere, a staircase ending at a blank  
wall. You have your beauty to be sure  
– it feels nice to stand on that lush  
carpet, to eat the caviar, to marvel  
at the beautiful thick paper and the  
lettering on the card – but on your  
own, you are not enough.  
I have reviewed your recent  
performance. I can see that you  
try. I know you work late, trying to  
acquaintance yourself with everything  
that is going on - to accommodate  
new voices, incorporate different  
views or perhaps even different  
structures. You put in so much effort.  
It just doesn't come off to well.  
Everything you touch just becomes  
slightly cheaper, tackier. A bit less

rich and shiny, less deep in color and texture. And sometimes I can see the beauty of Complexity just wilt and wither as soon as you go near her. And you, yourself – just stay the same. No collaboration can ever seem to truly impact you, no encounter seems to shake your core or to make you hesitate. I need Fragility, and you push her away.

I know that there is beauty in you and force. You take people by the hand and entice them onto territories where they would not have gone without you. But extending you comes at a cost.

There is a certain kind of stripping down that is helpful, necessary. Because it enables us to zoom in, to search better, to emphasize, to allow something new and strange or perhaps even alien to crystallize. Stripping down is leaving out what is in the way and as a result one can see clearer. But you, dear invitation, you require your own kind of stripping down. A very specific recipe. You have your own needs, your own model. And the kind of stripping down you need interferes with the kind of stripping down Discomfort needs. The kind of stripping down Complexity needs. And let's not even talk about the

needs of Fragility.

Frankly, you are getting in the way.

I regret sending you away. It's quite possible that years from now I will have a need for you, miss you, desire you. I may search for you, ask you to come back. But by that time things may have changed for you, too. You may have become entirely engrained in the one big corporation left, and we may turn out to be enemies. You may have become a wanderer, homeless in the gutter, clutching your bottle of bourbon and stinking up the street wondering how it all went wrong for you. I wonder if we will recognize each other in the time we cannot yet imagine.

Sincerely,

Jantine.

**To: Fiction**

**Subject: open up, man.**

**Dear Fiction,**

I recommend that you appropriate from Open Source Programming the

ability for others to run with what you come up with and perhaps even forget who started it. Forget whose idea it was in the first place or who came up with that image or this word.

When stealing ceases to be considered theft, there is the joy of sharing and if you are lucky the surprise at an unexpected end result. You'd love to feel this, I am sure. It would put a nice pink blossom on your cheeks.

Yeah, the end result will occasionally piss you off. It will not be what you had in mind. Get over it. Stop hoarding your pebbles. You say you are so curious. About everything. Step up your game and live up to it. You are ultrafragile but you will not break, you will be fine, you are just scared because you haven't been out much lately and if you don't get out, the outside world becomes scary. It is, but never mind. It's time for you to step out of comfort zone, and stop whining about how everyone else needs to step out of their comfort zone.

There's a million ways to do this. Ease up about your copyrights, man. Don't complain about the copyrights in medicine and then be just as uptight, yourself. Pass your stuff around asking for modifications, plagiarizations.

Invite a class of 6-year olds to rewrite

the story you just told them and print all their versions but not yours. Give your script to a nurse and ask her to replace the dialogue with that of her and the persons she meets during her day. Ask your bus driver for a scenario, rework it. These are cheesy, overly simple and flawed starting points. I'm sure you can come up with something better, if you just get off your chair. As a kid you played this game where you fold a paper in threes and the first person draws the legs, the second the torso, the third the head. The resulting figures were not particularly pretty but they offered the joy of the unexpected. A way to get out of the mold – to get a fresh breeze in and be able to rethink what a man should look like, and when it becomes a horse. To be functional, they needed only a few coordinates. The legs end here; the neck starts there. Your experiments need not be perfect, and they do not need to replace your voice, but you need them to stay nimble and playful and tantalized.

Invite the unexpected. You need that, man. You are getting rusty. I'm telling you this as a friend.

Jantine.



## **Dear Essayistic Intimacy,**

I am very thankful for the past five years of your service. After a very long rime, time looking at the world with the glasses of a scientist, an academic, or a grandmother, you forced your way into my work as a necessity. I realize how the honest trying of ideas or emotions have unlocked a level of honesty in my relationship to the world. I also realize that humans are feelings and I try to talk to humans. You have been a life vest, the only reason to keep the word 'speculation' in the dictionary. You have allowed the I to be present, the body to present itself and the self to be questioned. I can say with confidence that this long term endeavor of progress and learning would have never been possible without your sensitivity and generosity. Because of that is sad for me to write this letter. I am genuinely thankful and deeply sorry to let you know that I cannot afford your services anymore. This is a situation that, of course, has been building up for some months now. It has become critical.

I must say that, on the one hand, I am happy for you as I know recently you have received different offers. It

seems that essayistic intimacy is back, and sure you will make happy some other people soon. I also know that your trajectory will benefit from this. As for me, well, I guess I will never forget the inner communication you opened up in me. I just have to find new forms or approaches to it. I'm confident I, at some point, will be allright. I hope you find the best, soon.

With love, respect and admiration,

Emilio

## **Dear Fiction,**

with this letter I want to recommend you to have in mind the extraordinary qualities of sandcastle making. As you know, there are professionals around the world pushing this practice towards unknown territories these days, combining the playful approach of a kids game with the patience, depth and exactitude of minimalist artists.

I take the liberty of bringing this practice to your attention due to the inherent conditions such a job imply.

I believe you would benefit from working not only outdoors, but at the beach. You would result a more enjoyable when practicing by the sea. The physical work would soften some of your conceptual traps and, every night, the tide would remind you that there are more important things.

I hope you find this interesting in some way, hands on:

Emilio

### **Attention-spending,**

I am terribly sorry, but you've become a universally obsolete blinker. Like the one usually used to limit a horse's range of rear vision. Even my mother has exhausted your use and she's no longer inhabited by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr and a seven or so dating platforms. I have witnessed your internalization first-hand and how you became part of her body. How she at one day started to venture off towards the far end of her garden (which is a couple of meters away from her backdoor) and how she at that very day forgot the existence

of all these businesses and the shapes in which they brought us buckets of tainted water.

It is now, finally, that she daily consolidates herself with the Dictionary of Plant Pathology in which she loses Time AGAIN because we are Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work and that makes it difficult for her to comes to terms with because she never worked to begin with. She never read to begin with. She never finished anything. The remains we work with initiate themselves.

Welcome back.

Love,

Kaya

### **Dear Fiction,**

You are the sum of your wing spans. This is a strict inevitability. In spite of this, a point upon which you and I both agree, fixating wideness is still something you haven't done yet. So what I would like to propose is that

we carry / care for an attitude towards  
these devices of flight, of a departure,  
an uprooting. The feathers we need  
to stick and construct and bundle  
together, in the hope that they will  
make us willful prisoners of our own  
lacks, until they self-efface.

We go up. Aboveground.

Somehow, we lose our wing spans.  
We start worrying. What is a sum?  
The sum of its parts? We fall. Dwindle  
down.

Featherlike, we get picked up. Sticked  
up, constructed and bundled.

We go up. Losing the architecture of  
our lacks. Under-a-ground. Go.

Love,

Kaya

550.1

~~USER EXPERIENCE~~ VOUCHER  
~~SELF-EXPRESSION~~

RHYTHM

~~TRANSPARENCY~~

RUBIKS CUBE

~~COMMITMENT IS A GLOBAL CURRENCY~~

~~NOTHING IS PRECIOUS~~

DELETE-BUTTON

~~LONGING~~

OPENNESS

~~SIMPLICITY~~

SAFETY

~~IMAGINATION~~

BLIND  
BAKING

DISTANCE

CRITICAL

~~USELESSNESS~~

POPULIST BAND:  
COUNTER MYTH

EXPERIMENT WITH FORM

~~APPLICATION OF DOUBT~~

GIF

JUST GO

~~REACTION ON REACTION~~

DOUBT

**Dear user experience,**

After all our years together, having to write this breaks my heart. We went through some hard times together, editing very rough drafts, cutting the most heartfelt passages and the most creative puns. We had to dumb down till it felt like there was nothing left. Yet we always made it through.

So it must come as a surprise that I'm breaking up with you anyway. Although, it has to be said, there was always something unhealthy about us. That obsession with our audience's attention, their understanding, their love...

That I've decided to go with self-expression surely makes it extra tough for you. I know you two have always been at odds.

If I could I'd keep you both, but I have to choose. I'll miss your tidiness, your economy, your simplicity and clarity, and even your shallowness, your haughtiness, your white lies.

It pains me to realize that I'll deeply ache for all of the above, yet I really have no choice. It is a simple matter

of survival. As there can be an author without an audience, but not the other way around.

With love, Niels

(PS. I just now realize I wrote you an accessible rejection letter. I think I have to go away for a while.)

**Dear fiction,**

You already have a lot. Some would say everything. Representations of all of life. Of all our conscious thought and dreams. Of all the things we see, and make, and want. Yet it is still not enough. You're a spoiled child, fiction.

Those who have a lot want bigger versions of the same, or more of it, right? Well, sorry, but I'm not about to support your stubborn capitalist tendencies.

Still, I don't want to ruin the party. Be that one uncle who says he didn't get you a gift because, 'well', he brought his 'jokes and general good character'.

I could be smart about it and say, I'll

give you nothing. Let you take it easy for a while, for introspection, and meditation, and all that. But, I hate to be blunt, you are so full of nothing already.

So I guess a voucher will have to do. You're free to exchange it for anything you like. Convenient, right?

Niels

### **Dear Transparency,**

We've had a good run, but you're getting quite annoying. Look at you. Yes, you had the best intentions. But, mami, par  . Stop. You're getting into round discussions. Just because everything it's beginning to be a desmadre? No no no. Mi niche, that's not the way. Is better to stay silence sometimes. Aqu   se vino a sabrosearch con las ideas. Look, go home. Get in your living and search for some Richie Ray or something. Un 'Lo atara la arache', a beast sound. We can still hang around if you like, but I would prefer that, for the next few days, agites baldosa. Go and dance to everyone's voices.

Post-truthfully,

Rhythm.

### **Fiction,**

This is the Rubik's cube. I'm not going to tell what you should say or not. Or do or not. Or think or not. It's a colaborative work... so this maybe like a 'how to do' idea. Yo know, the thing with the cube is this: it has six different faces. Each of them very different. It's own color. Individuality, you may say. Each face can move away and interact with any other color. Any other individual. Your whole face can interact, but the only part that would not move is the center. You can ply with it however you want, but each center will stay at his place. That's each one stubbornness and beliefs. So you'll have to find a way to be cool with that. Think of every corner as an opinion. When you start a discussion around a topic, each face can disappear, ando you'll find everyone's opinions and colours close to your beliefs. It can be hard and for sure everything will derailed. But for the whole cube to be rearmed --and

not just one face-- it's needed. Once you find a way to put every faces color together, you'll get an idea form, and it'll consist of six different individualities.

Daniel.

### **Dearest Commitment-as-a-Global-Currency,**

I made you, I own you; I can unmake you, I can disown you.

Goodbye.

Sincerely mine,

My Will.

### **Hi Fiction,**

Allow me to introduce the delete button.

You can hook it out of your machine so you can never use it, or

### **Dear Imagination,**

I hope this message finds you well, even though it will probably leave the two of us all but well. It will not be easy for me to let go of the image SpongeBob drew of you: a rainbow between two hands, accompanied by a smile. This image has often popped into my mind whenever you would make me smile and other people would ask me what I was smiling at. It was you who directed the tiny films in front of my eyes that kept me from getting my driver's license three times – and I thank you for it. You taught me to take my time - to pay attention to detail. However, I feel like the time has come to say goodbye. It really hurts me to say that through paying attention to details I have learned so many new techniques and seen so many new things that I do not feel that I need you to help me make them up any more. They are here for me to find. There have been many special moments in our collaboration that may have happened, all of them, by encounter and coincidence. I have been told I should be scaling down – please let me make it very clear that I am letting you go out of necessity, not

because it pleases me to.

If it were up to me, I would take you and all our colleagues on project LIFE to the beach. We could watch the clouds all day and for once avoid avoiding clichés and tell one another the shapes they remind us of.

I am sure there are many others who could use your ideas in their work and lives. I regard myself a lucky woman to have had you by my side all these years. Do not lose hope. You have taught me enough to continue without you and you are needed elsewhere. This does not mean you will not be missed.

Yours,

Esmé

### **Dear fiction,**

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you something called blind baking. You may or may not have heard about the concept of blind baking. If you have not, the term may sound exotic or perhaps even rather dangerous to you. To reassure you, the process does involve heat, although

you are allowed to keep your eyes open, and will probably have to for the process to work optimally.

WikiHow defines blind baking as follows: “Blind baking is partially or completely baking a pastry base before adding the filling. This creates a stronger crust that can hold moist filling without getting soggy; it’s also useful when filling needs less time to cook than the pastry.” If you’re thinking lemon meringue pie, you’re thinking correctly.

Blind baking is baking in stages. In order for the crust to get so strong that it is able to hold a filling that gets solidified by baking and thus is liquid when poured into the base, the crust must be given extra time in the oven, which is a very particular stage of the baking process. In this stage, the baker is reduced to a voyeur, as a baker cannot fulfil the function of the oven as he or she can the function of the automatic mixer, the grater, or the rolling pin. The baker can only determine the amount of time and the intensity of the baking – and these are not so very arbitrary, because the actual baking of the material is necessary to prevent all sorts of nasty things resulting from ingesting inadequately baked pastry, such



as stomach aches, nausea and gas issues.

The time that the pastry base has to spend in the oven allows for a residue of energy on the baker's part, which can be applied to the careful construction of the filling. The filling is a delicate, creamy and often fluffy part of the end product, which needs less time in the oven but perhaps more happy thoughts of little lambs hopping through flowery meadows - and arm muscles. This is both a hopeful stage, as well as a hard but rewarding one that brings one back to one's childhood.

In order to let the pastry base stay nice and flat instead of usurping the power of fluffiness reserved for the filling, pressure needs to be applied to the pastry while in the oven. This is usually done by layering the base with parchment paper and ceramic beads. The baker has to trust in the power of the beads and the oven to deliver to him or her the perfectly shaped and baked pastry.

As you may understand, dear fiction, the process is not simple, but after going through it several times, one may easily memorize and come to love these steps. The result is the interplay between base and filling, which is

powerful yet subtle, buttery yet light, and may come to surprise even those who have come to trust their kitchen utensils,

Sincerely,

Esmé van den Boom (excessive baker)

**Dear super cairn terrier,**

If one is already useless, how can it turn into useful? what value you can bring concerning time, space and body?

Do you think that watching those stupid cairn terrier images and videos on instagram is useful in any sense?

Do you think that those trash is useful? Of course in this sense I understand the trash can be useful? But can you formulate other useless things which can have the value? Esp in the context of 'post-truth' age?

You also mentioned 'uselessness' can be 'parallel methods' to certain complex issues? but if you can find out the way to intrinsically solve problem,

what is the value of this parallel methods? why do we need it?

Sincerely,  
Another cairn terrier

**(Xiaofeng didn't write a letter of recommendation. Instead, he came up with an idea: the solution to fighting myths in a post-truth age is not telling the truth; it's creating countermyths. He proposed to do this in the form of a Guns 'n' Roses-style band, replacing all the band members by populists like Donald Trump and Marie Le Pen. We all agreed the band name should be 'Countermyth' and Trump would be the drummer. With a microphone, though, like Don Henley. Not like Phil Collins.)**

**Dear doubt,**

We

*[I type we, so I can blame someone else, anybody, someone, somebody, a group, collective, the Other, other, the individual being told to make this decision, never myself or maybe never*

*not myself, but not me, stop thinking it is me rejecting you, I am so sorry.]*  
*[[As if that is a thing we have to do in fiction]] [well, maybe it is]*

We discovered the experiment of form is a preferred core value when creating fiction.

*[at least, let's pretend it does. Or is this beyond pretending? Am I referring to the experiment of form in this rejection letter to insert doubt in it anyway? Could doubt be a synonym of form? Is form able to create doubt, when applied the right way in a narrative, text, play, artwork, video]*

So we have to let you go. As we said earlier, we had to choose. Between you, doubt, and the experiment of form when creating fiction, a fiction. And yes, we know, choices in itself create the fiction, and you, doubt always appear on stage before making a decision. We know you are the catalysator of form, voice, atmosphere, character development. But, you are doubt, so you keep thinking, repeating, re-repeating, making pro- and con-lists. Do you get it? And we are sorry to inform you that you, in this case, seem to obstruct

fiction, in a way. Make possible, but obstruct.

*[Sorry, can I maybe go back to the start of the process of deciding?]*

No

*[[Is this really what the 'we' wants?]]*

Do you think we did not overthink this decision well enough?

### **Dear fiction,**

With a lot of enthusiasm, dogs collapsing into walls, collapsing into walls, a raccoon performing a headroll, a headroll a headroll in a living room, headroll, headroll, headroll, cats bouncing up and down and up and down and up and down, Brad Pitt dancing and dancing and dancing and dab and dab and dab and high five and high five and high five I introduce to you: the GIF.

The what? The Internet says: GIF: The Graphics Interchange Format, better known by its acronym GIF / 'dʒɪf/ JIF or /'gɪf/ GHIF. It is a bitmap image format, consisting of three

or more still images moving. Think of a flock of birds flying through the air, or think of a flipbook you used to make as a kid – or as a grown-up. This flipbook is put on repeat. And repeat and repeat. It is a tiny video-loop. Nowadays it can also be an excerpt of something happening in the world of media, a fragment being cut into a flipbook version of events. As if it is the semiotics of the bigger picture.

A GIF does not only function as a funny moving image to send to friends who reply with: 'hahahahaha nice' or your mother who does not understand what she is seeing in her whatsapp screen, a GIF may add another show-don't-tell-layer to the narrative. And of course, a GIF refers to the world it exists in, but it is able to express an emotion, a situation. It can call to action, it can make you laugh, sometimes it poses a question. It can pull you deeper into a story, a feeling, or break through the context of the narrative, opening up new associations in your mind. It does not have to be funny (as a GIF is seen most of the time), it can serve a bigger function. It is easy to insert, easy to skip, easy to watch and watch and watch. It can communicate with the

fiction, with the storyworld.

Now you can come up with a way too incorporate this.

Good luck, a GIF-fan.

**Yes.**

Yes, you have a good shape.

A nice skin.

Yes. Yes.

You have a good shape.

You smell like honey.

And your posture fits everyone I guess.

Actually you are like a model for a perfume.

A smiley face with a perfect body.

Yes.

Yes, you have a good shape.

A nice skin.

You smell like honey.

And your posture fits everyone I guess.

Actually you are like a model for a perfume.

A smiley face with a perfect body.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, you have a good shape.

A nice skin.

You smell like honey.

You really smell like honey.

Real honey.

And your posture fits everyone I guess.

Actually you are like a model for a perfume.

A smiley face with a perfect body.

Yes.

And.

Maybe there are people who don't know how to use you, but that's not your fault.

They don't have any self reflection and that's okay, you know that.

Yes.

Yes.

You have nice skin.

Yes.

Yes, you have a good shape.

A nice skin.

You smell like honey.

And your posture fits everyone I guess.

Actually you are like a model for a perfume.

A smiley face with a perfect body.

Yes.

But.

Maybe there are people who don't know how to use you, but that's not

your fault.

They don't have any self reflection and that's okay, you know that.

There are people without self reflection.

But you smell like honey.

Actually you are like a model for a perfume.

Yes.

Yes.

But.

Maybe there are people who don't know how to use you, but that's not your fault.

They don't have any self reflection and that's okay, you know that.

There are people without self reflection.

Like people who have trouble to talk.

And that's also okay.

Even as there are people who are constantly being rejected.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, but you have a good shape.

A nice skin.

Yes. Yes.

You have a good shape.

You smell like honey.

Real honey.

And your posture fits everyone I guess.

Actually you are like a model for a

perfume.

A smiley face with a perfect body.

Your skin, your shape, your smell.

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes

But no.

**Yeah, hi-**

I want...-

Maybe, that...-

No.

You have to...-

I tell you why we have to...- No.

You have the wind, she can be...- No

You know that...-

Yeah, the weather...-

Is it possible that you...- No.

Or people who sells...-

It's better for anybody that we...-

Look, what I try to tell you is that's

better for the world that...- No.

Okay.

What should we do with waiters

and...-No

Waiters are the most...-

Waiters...-

Wait.

No, yes.

I have to tell you about...-

Its better that your parent are  
gonna...-

That parents are disappearing...-

You can go to...- No.

And then you are in...-

Look, friends are not necessary,  
because...-

Is it an idea that you...-

Or people with an strong opinion they  
have to...- No.

That everything is in...-

Look...-

Skip the...-

Use only the...- No.

Its better to skip all the...-

Or...-

That was...-



## REJECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

*Creative imagination is being hijacked by marketing mechanisms. Storytelling is used in branding, politics and management to shape behaviour and channel emotions; it leads us to identify with models and to conform to protocols. This new narrative order of the storytelling machine is a more effective means of oppression than Orwell ever dreamt.*

- Christian Salmon

The **Post-Truth Fiction** programme – that took place between the 21st and the 24th of June 2017 in Arnhem, the Netherlands – investigated alternative ways of constructing narrative and possible new forms of authorship. Along with various lectures and a conference there was a three-day workshop in which 26 participants worked on ideas for these new forms. In a workshop led by writer and radio producer Dennis Gaens they were asked to choose two key values from their own practice that pertained to fiction writing in general. Subsequently they were asked to reject one of them in a letter and introduce a value from any other field to take its place. This zine is a collection of those assignments.

Dennis Gaens is a writer, radio producer and teacher. In 2014 he started the literary podcast *Ondercast*. He is a teacher Creative Writing at ArtEZ University of the Arts and a publisher and editor at Literair Productiehuis Wintertuin. He is currently working on a novel and various new radio productions.

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