

Dear Marie France,

I'm on the tube thinking of you, a young lad and a bird sitting in front of me, laughing loudly at their drunkenness. They've been together for 12 years and the lad says it was like winning at life - *you're not scared of dying, you punk* - they get off the train leaving a whiff of vinegary chips and I hesitate. I want to write you a love letter on love but I fear that this is the kind of romantic mawkishness expected of women, as opposed to the heroic sorrows of emotional men. So I'm here writing you a love letter, for this same reason.

Let me start with an example. An apple wants to access its origin, a state of coincidence with its self. As the apple feels like a slice, and so does the pear, sometimes they try to come together - with their baggage of personal history, subjectivity, sometimes trauma. They meet their selves through each other and if they close their eyes they can almost feel the friction of their juices. The tension, the attempt to extend one pearness into another's apple-ness, so close and yet so inaccessible. The whole thing is hopeless you see.

Do you remember how the worst thing that ever happened to you felt? Gasping for oxygen in an empty bed today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow you forget how to sleep. The apple slowly rotting from its branch, falling and fertilizing the soil while decomposing. Or you remember that time you were offered a panino with freshly sliced mortadella, such a blessing! And then - you don't even understand how - you're left there, speechless wide-open mouth, I remember you staring at the dusty mortadella near your touristy flip-flops. Heart-breaking. It doesn't have to be mortadella; it can be a blob of green sterile melting pistachio ice cream on the pavement. The point is, Marie France, that all of these things are what people refer to as love.

I am in-between two screens, facing each other // Upstairs, two people, facing each other }

For Epicurus life is nothing but the product of a casual collision between atoms. Encounters are the basic generative act yet a potentially disruptive and destructive one. It changes inevitably the subjects of the encounter in a non-reversible way. Life, when lived fully, is the story of these fundamental encounters, discovering 'otherness' whilst discovering ourselves. What happened that evening was that you, Marie France, encountered three guests while they were encountering you and downstairs people were encountering your encounter or an ectoplasmic video/audio equivalent for it. No wonder some left the room in a state of sedate dizziness. Lolling through the unbearable tenderness and gloom of my addled relationships, the dancing, the waiting, the fucking, the joking, I can't help but wonder what does it mean for a woman to encounter a man?

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Unless you're too cynical, too young or too stupid you must believe in love, even if, *I suspect*, nobody is that sure what it really means. On the other hand, there is no ambiguity in pain and sadness. When you mourn the loss of the loved object, you're left with a void full of memories and nothing really matters anymore. Yet *I feel love*. Lying on this carpet, like an open wound, I imagine that one day we will be in front of each other but we won't see each other and our names will be forgotten. Our bodies were two screens, flickering rhythmically at each other, trying to be crashing waves - the sweetest delusion. I look at the mirror, at the computer screen, at my phone, windows to nowhere looking back at me as you do, blank. *Oh, I'm so boooored*, I think I'm staying in tonight. Whatever works for you, ok, fine, yeah, that's great. Thanks.

Marie France as the chosen loved object, according to Roland Barthes you have no personality of your own yet you are the Persona par-excellence, incomparable, a living image. When exploring "the fragments of a lovers's discourse" he had no interest in love stories, in domesticated and consequential tales of affection, and I think that's very good. He said that I exist, as the suffering lover, in a dimension resembling folly: fragments of imagery without a beginning or an end, a protracted and sometimes elated crisis. The corners of my mouth hurt, like cement - Marie France, *Do you think my smile is tender?*

With love,

Valentina