

DEAR FRIEND,

As always, I am very happy to hear from you! Yet to answer your question –

“How are you?” – can be a little difficult these days. What do you want me to say?

If I start digging into the “how”, I’ll never stop. So I will say: “Fine, I think, and hope that you are, too.”

Your last letter blew my mind. I haven’t read anything that touching and precise in such a long time, maybe even never. At the same time, there is something I would like to tell you. I very much appreciate your writing, but not the impenetrable darkness that surrounds you. I am amazed at how you can open up to me like this if you know that I can’t be sure if you actually exist.

I wish I could tell you this in person, after a hug. I’m firmly convinced that when people can look each other in the eye, everything becomes more tangible. We are already living in times when “in person” is a luxury addition, something that it’s not available with the average membership subscription. I am utterly bored with machines. Half of the day I keep arguing with them: they insist “I am wrong” and I insist “I am right to be wrong.” It’s endless; I will never get it right. There is always an update of some sort missing, out of date, out of data, out of space. Just remind me tomorrow, ok? I have always preferred mistakes to no mistakes. That’s why I prefer speaking to writing. It allows me all the awkward pauses, hesitation, and possibility of compliance. Sure, in writing it can all exist as well, yet it it feels composed. It easily becomes too much, as you can always go back, change, edit it out, even delete it all at once. Perhaps the biggest hesitation exists in my mind... How can I possibly make my tongue slip in writing? Yes. No. I don’t know.

When I read something that fascinates me, I can’t stop thinking about the person who wrote it. To tell you the truth, the virtual disturbs me. Suddenly all the online services call me by your name because I once logged in with it. In the film *Chiamami col tuo nome* by Luca Guadagnino, calling each other by their name marks a desire to blur boundaries between the self and the other—it is the lovers’ act of becoming one. But what happens when I cannot be sure that you exist and yet I am called by your name, then do I also suddenly exist a little bit less? By the way, what did you think of the film?

I do agree with you when you say that what one chooses to put outside oneself, to make public, can’t and shouldn’t become a magnet that a reader or a listener sucks up entirely. Any individual has the right to keep her person separate, if she wants, even her image, from the public effects of her work. Do you know of anybody who actually consistently does that? I guess the self-representation serves as some kind of a hook that is first celebrated, then liked and shared, and eventually monetised by all of us. Perhaps we are so desperately looking for proof or a trace of a body behind a text, a book, a work of art, because we are afraid to be tricked into fabrication, known also as fake news generated by algorithms and anonymous hackers. It is a question of source and trust. We are not used to listening to the unknown voice from the dark and tend to silence this ghostly

agency. We tend to consider it noise, something that is rooted in the shadows and should remain there, because darkness is always darkness. We are always missing a face behind the voice; nobody likes to receive anonymous letters. We don’t want to underestimate the body, because we know it’s all we have. The body of likes, the body of current. But by monetising every image, every move of it, it slowly slips away from us. The author has been dead for a while, but until the machine can’t feel the pain it isn’t yet alive enough.

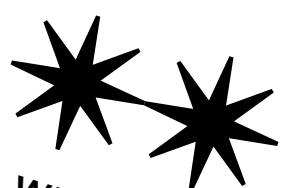
Almost every time I return home, I see my double. But who is that third who always walks beside you? Maybe the old myths about inspiration did have some truth in them: when one makes creative work, one is inhabited by others. It can be understood in a romantic sense or practical, even technological sense. For example, a shared pseudonym allows its users to recognize each other for the simple fact of sharing a name. Or internet memes that are situated at the intersection of the shared imagination that is authorless yet presented. A meme can tap into our collectively held beliefs and push them to unexpected paths and outcomes. Digital technologies seem to bring forth information and knowledge, but only through the workings of something unseen and undecidable.

But let’s get back to where I started—me being disturbed by the virtual. Virtuality impinges on the present. It conditions expectations and motivates cultural production. I know you insist that one needs to look at a text as a self-sufficient body, a body which has in itself, in its makeup, all the questions and answers. That writing describes the outlines of a virtual world. But then again, can anything ever exist outside of the text? Yes. No. I don’t know.

I might be naive, but I believe that in fiction one pretends much less than one does in reality. In fiction, we say and recognize things about ourselves, which, for the sake of propriety, we ignore or don’t talk about in reality. Whereas virtual reality, with it’s relentless technological upgrades, can be an overproduced and well-managed yet rather predictable sensory experience. But you are not predictable, and I guess what I am trying to say is that my admiration for the subjects that you deal with will not diminish, whatever your physical form.

I apologise, meanwhile, for the pointless outburst. Yet if I don’t have an outburst with you, with whom would I?

FONDLY,  
TRIN TAMM



WILL YOU  
STILL LOVE ME  
TOMORROW?