



She really looks substantial when she's blown up

# ***Fiction Together***

**Anita Loe  
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Main tutor: Hilde Hauan

Text guidance and help: Daniela Cascella, Arne Skaug Olsen,  
Eva Lien, Hilde Pytkowski and Wanda Grimsgaard

*(...) these afternoons were crammed with more dramatic and sensational events than occur, often, in a whole lifetime. These were the events which took place in the book I was reading. It is true that the people concerned in them were not what Françoise would have called 'real people.' But none of the feelings which the joys or misfortunes of a 'real' person awaken in us can be awakened except through a mental picture of those joys or misfortunes; and the ingenuity of the first novelist lay in his understanding that, as the picture was the one essential element in the complicated structure of our emotions, so that simplification of it which consisted in the suppression, pure and simple, of 'real' people would be a decided improvement. A 'real' person, profoundly as we may sympathize with him, is in a great measure perceptible only through our senses, that is to say, he remains opaque, offers a dead weight which our sensibilities have not the strength to lift. If some misfortune comes to him, it is only in one small section of the complete idea we have of him that we are capable of feeling any emotion; indeed it is only in one small section of the complete idea he has of himself that he is capable of feeling any emotion either. The novelist's happy discovery was to think of substituting for those opaque sections, impenetrable by the human spirit, their equivalent in immaterial sections, things, that is, which the spirit can assimilate to itself. After which it matters not that the actions, the feelings of this new order of creatures appear to us in the guise of truth, since we have made them our own, since it is in ourselves that they are happening, that they are holding in thrall, while we turn over, feverishly, the pages of the book, our quickened breath and staring eyes. And once the novelist has brought us to that state, in which, as in all purely mental states, every emotion is multiplied ten-fold, into which his book comes to disturb us as might a dream, but a dream more lucid, and of a more lasting impression than those which come to us in sleep (...)*

Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of things past, Swanns Way*

# ***Dear Agnes***

***A conversation between Anita Loe and Agnes Martin, as experienced by Anita Loe***

Dear Agnes. I can feel you, shuffling your feet in the shadows.

**1**

***I say:*** This is year 2016, Bergen, winter. I sit by a baby blue writing desk underground. My shoulders are at level with the sidewalk outside the window. It is a cold and lonely night – please come – I have been writing and writing for two months about my work. Writing about writing. Clinging to reality, the words slipped on the white pages. I didn't believe them. A battleground of sentences half-finished. I say the first words out loud into the room, hoping that the rest will follow, but they come back to me hollow and then there is only silence, and silence. Am I even in this room? *Can we be alone and human at the same time?* Be my invisible friend and let's talk together about my work.

***You say:*** Hello. I am sitting on your shoulder now. Why do you speak English to me? Nå som jeg er død kan vi godt snakke norsk.

***I say:*** No, let's speak English. My own language feels too real. In English, everything gets the color of screenplays and lyrics. In this language, we can sit in a parallel world and look at everything with strange eyes.

***You say:*** I want to hear more about reality and invisible friends, but first – why did you call me and not, say, Clarice Lispector or Sylvia Plath?

***I say:*** Just recently, I read something you wrote about inspiration, and it made me start writing again. I continued reading your texts. Some of them were handwritten. I felt that you were there, through your imprint. Combined, your texts are almost a manifesto. When they are read together, your prophetic tone of truth gets a feeling of desperation and your wisdoms become elusive and contradictive. How could they not? What you say needs air. The reader must lay her weapons down to stay in this room. Five years ago, I saw a video interview from 1997. The way your eyes and lips moved were mesmerizing and your pauses elevated the words. Your image became a counter-wave to the tide of intellectual voices that had and still has a paralyzing effect on me. Maybe I call you now because you seem to have wrestled with your method more than others. The question *how* – you try to answer it again and again. Me too. In a perpetual back and forth between me and myself, I strive for something that will make something possible (a staggering in darkness). Everything in my work exudes from this. The search even becomes an object of study.

And then you say things that are not easily said, like wanting to fill the canvas with pure emotion. Please – stay with me.

***You say:*** No little mouse has to be alone in a world full of ghosts, and to be a voice in your head is a role that suits me well. I will talk to you about inspiration. I always describe it as a natural thing so that it will be recognized and used by artists, because it is the beginning and end of all art work. I am saying wake up to your inspirations and nothing at all about what



you should do in this life – nothing about morals or values or actions.

We live a short time in this life and then we die and are gone from it without a trace, like last summers' leaves. Anyone familiar with inspiration knows that this is true. An inspiration is a happy moment that takes us by surprise. It is an untroubled state of mind. Off course we know that an untroubled state of mind cannot last so we say that inspiration comes and goes, but it is there all the time waiting for us to be untroubled again. We can therefore say that it is pervasive. It is pervasive but not a power – a peaceful and consoling thing even to animals and plants. The moments of inspiration added together make what we refer to as sensibility.

You have to hold your mind still in order to hear inspiration clearly. Even now you can hear it saying: "Yes" and "No". You look at a text and say: "Is this it", and your mind answers and says "Yes" or "No". Inspiration is dependent on a clear mind.

**I say:** In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that Shakespeare had the clearest mind of all. And she says perhaps the reason we know so little about him is that his bitternesses and angers are hidden from us. His wish to bother us with them is burnt out and eaten up. This makes his poetry float freely and unhindered. She moves on to examples of women poets who have not digested their hindrances. Ravaged and disturbed by hatred and lament, their books become deformed and warped. They write in rage where they should write calmly. Write stupidly where they should write wisely. Write about themselves where they should write about characters. In war with destiny. How could they avoid dying young, crippled and warped, she says.

Rereading it, I mistakenly read one word as I would have liked it to be. I read the Norwegian word *avsporet* (derailed) as *ansporet* (spurred) and made this new sentence: *Hennes fantasi ble ansporet gjennom indignasjon*. (Her imagination was spurred through indignation). I was so happy when I read it in the wrong way, and then, when I saw that I had made a mistake, I realized what the text had done to me the first time I read it. As if I wasn't before, it made me so ashamed of my too intense feelings and chaos. I could hardly work for the fear of being a pervert. Now I will say to you both that the mess and the clear moment of having one's head out of it, go in waves and are inseparable dualities. The mess is the premise, and it has value in itself. Perhaps everyone is aware of this. I have been working hard to see it.

Of all the substances on earth, diamonds are the most static. Humans are soft and I think it might be our finest quality.

**You say:** Carbon is what all life on earth is built from, and diamonds are pure carbon. That is why we love them. Great art is about perfection – I spend all my time thinking about perfection. The human mind is capable of perceiving and responding to perfection. The pyramids in the desert are the form of endless praise and the whole world goes to see them for that reason and they'll keep going. The difference between nature and art is that there's no perfection in nature. If I throw five pennies on the floor, each time the spaces will be different – there's no perfection in that. I work so that all of my spaces are the same – are perfect. This is not contrary to what you are saying. Your problem is thinking, you need to stop thinking.

**I say:** But-

**You say:** What you must ask yourself, is this question: How does an artist bring his inspirations to bear on his work without the use of intellect? The answer is: perception. Perception is the primary experience. For example, the sun shines on your hand and you say, "This is a caress", now that's real. It goes on all the time whether we are awake or asleep. In thinking we consider that which we have perceived. Thinking is a secondary experience. Thinking compares everything that we have perceived with everything that we perceive at the moment. There is no difference between thinking and relative living. Thinking leads to pride, identification, confusion and fear.

**I say:** Clarice Lispector writes it in a way I like better, in *A Breath of Life*. *The pre-thought is the immediate past of the instant. Thinking is the concretization, materialization of what was pre-thought. Really pre-thinking is what guides us, since it's intimately linked to my mute unconsciousness. The pre-thought is not rational. It's almost virginal. Sometimes the feeling of pre-thinking is agonizing: it's the tortuous creation that thrashes in the shadows and is only freed after thinking – with words.*

Pride, identification, confusion and fear – this is our significance, what makes us different from other animals. They are bad words belonging to partly positive attributes. Intelligence is what makes you able to distinguish a spontaneous response to nature from other experiences, and enjoy the simplicity of it.

**You say:** (Pause) By the use of words and the intellect we have created a world that does not actually exist. We talk about experience, but it is just talk. We flatter ourselves with how well we put it, but we will not understand anything with words. Dependence on the intellect is so thoroughly taught that some people think they would die if they stopped thinking. Almost everyone thinks that it would be very dangerous and some believe that civilization would dissolve.

The intellectual is in fact death. I will give you an example: If you were at the beach and keenly aware of the shining waves, the fragrant air, the freedom of the mind, feeling happy and free – that is reality. That is life. Now if someone came on the beach with a radio and tuned it to the news – that is the intellectual and political. You would feel the shock of moving suddenly from reality to unreality. You would be depressed and irritated.

**I say:** Yes, but you know, on rainy days there are no people and no radios at the beach. I think... I think there are different sorts of thinking, friends and enemies of my work, and like people themselves, ideas can seem one and be the other. For a long time, I read existential philosophy because I thought it could help free me from mind control and make it possible to see more clearly and then work better. I was in death desert. Everything I made felt wrong. Instead of writing, I was making ugly objects. During two, three years, I read the book *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre* by Walter Kaufmann. I read it slowly because I read more books about the same topics between every chapter. The book contains texts by both philosophers and fiction writers. The line is blurry because existentialism is about human experience. Walter Kaufmann admits that few would have wanted to be a part of the collection. It is messy company, arbitrary more often than not.

He writes: *The existentialists have tried to bring philosophy down to earth again like Socrates; but the existentialist and the analytical philosopher are each only half a Socrates. The existentialist has taken up the passionate concern with questions that arise from life, the moral pathos, and the firm belief that, to be serious, a philosophy has to be lived. The*

*analytical philosophers, on the other hand, insist – as Socrates did, too – that no moral pathos, no tradition, and no views, however elevated, justify unanalyzed ideas, murky arguments, or a touch of confusion. In Nietzsche – and more or less in every great philosopher before him, too – philosophy occurred in the tension between these two timeless tendencies, now inclining one way, now the other.*

Some writers and thinkers want to burn down constructions in order to make a new bird rise from the ashes. There seems not to be enough room. An aspect to existentialism is a protest to systems and an attempt to make the reader stop, reveal a deception, and take responsibility as an individual, or maybe just recognize exactly what the philosopher pointed out. And destroy half the ship. Is this just me? Each one who teaches makes her own pedantry, suggesting destruction in order to make a new bird, their bird. In pieces I float in different directions, not enough *one* to believe in a project. I feel tempted to say that existentialism was a dead end, now that I am choosing other strategies (am I?). Bad brothers making trouble. If not watched, like with fire, critical thinking spreads and makes everything take the shape of smoke.

I have realized that it is impossible to fight writer's block – that creature – with criticism. Even at all to fight. Let it bite. In Kafka's parables *Before the Law*, a man sits by the gate of what he seeks, and does not come past the guard. He dies there, like everyone's greatest fear. The creature will always come back in new guises. It moves in the dark, like monsters in the room. Do not try to think them away. The enemy of the priest is the one who can stand her own construction. The enemy of intellectuality is the one who feels.

**You say:** You are talking about fear, and fear cannot be taken by the horns. It must be kissed. It is the most successful reflection of the embrace of reality. But for that you must give up self-assertion and take a vow to wait for the word. Well, the embrace is the reflection of reality and it goes on forever.

**I say:** The word is – shame. Shame is the human with a tail, graceless. I held a presentation in the beginning of the master program where I said I was ashamed to talk about my research topic, which was freedom. It was – is – so banal, but to talk about something else would be to lie to avoid making a fool of myself and my work. Hilde Huan, my tutor, said: *I think you want to be ashamed*. Like a slap. Beauty... beauty travels with darkness: it needs a shadow to glow, a bottom halo. I am a clown, I am weak and stupid and the writing comes finally, like flowers in spring (that sort of phrase might be accepted, then. I will keep it as an example). Suddenly everything is possible.

It could be argued that this text is like moist hands. I suspect that it should be censored. But I put this curly wig on and you are here on my shoulder. What I was going to say, is that I have realized that critical, analytical thinking is the guarding creature. Its name is shame. If I am it, I can write. My new strategy is to look at the surface of the sea instead of reading philosophy.

**You say:** You really have an interior battle going on. Still, I can see that it is not only a wallowing in your own depravity, but also an investigation into human nature and work process. It is even almost universal. And I can see that while you do talk about yourself a lot, also in your work, it is not really about you at all.

Almost everyone believes that art is from the experience of the artist, meaning the intellectually grasped experience. They believe that it is affected by where you live and what

you do. But ones “biography”, character, abilities, knowledge all of that has nothing to do with art work. Inspiration is the beginning and the middle and the end.

*I say:* In *Tradition and the Individual Talent: An Essay*, T.S. Eliot writes, *Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.*

Any text uses something as material to make something new. Language shapes the sensed, multiple world into form. Parts of bigger pictures are picked and placed in constellations. Choice (Siamese twin sister of imagination) makes fiction. A text is a new reality more tidy than sensed reality. It can never live up to full multiplicity. The reality of the text must therefore leave the reality of the writer. That is why writing is fun, and a relief. It constitutes freedom to play with what is.

In *Confessions*, Augustine of Hippo describes a panic power which the human mind holds. A labyrinthine, endless memory.

*Great is the power of memory. It is a true marvel, O my God, a profound and infinite multiplicity! And this is the mind, and this I myself am. What, then, am I, O my God? Of what nature am I? A life various, and manifold, and exceedingly vast. Behold in the numberless halls and caves, in the innumerable fields and dens and caverns of my memory, full without measure of numberless kinds of things-*

*(...)*

*-through all these I run and fly to and fro. I penetrate into them on this side and that as far as I can and yet there is nowhere any end. So great is the power of memory, so great the power of life in man whose life is mortal! What, then, shall I do, O thou my true life, my God? I will pass even beyond this power of mine that is called memory – I will pass beyond it, that I may come to thee, O lovely Light.*

*(Pause) Agnes, are you there?*



**I say:** Dear Agnes, I have wanted to talk to you for days, but I have been afraid you would not come to sit on my shoulder. When inspiration doesn't come, and I try to find it, what I find half the time is a horrible abyss.

**You say:** As soon as we are alone, we are aware of fear. Some of us are so faint-hearted that we never allow ourselves to be alone for this reason. But artists must of necessity be alone and therefore they must recognize and overcome fears.

**I say:** It's good that you are here. I am getting closer to my work. To concentrate, I turn up the volume of Bach's allegro piano concerts. Only one thread of thought can pass through loud, noisy music. I learned this from an interview with Sara Stridsberg. When she writes, she listens to music, *so loud that it knocks out all sensible thoughts and the intellect disappears.*

These two years in Bergen, I have been in a transition between making objects and making the decision to write. It was a slow process, but now I have given away my materials. Between the two different practices, objects got the function of muses and collaborative partners in writing, like a bridge, or like an example of how there is never a clean break.

**You say:** *In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you.* This was said by Buddha.

**I say:** That quote has been revolving in my head. In November 2014, the poet Henning Bergsvåg had a writing course with my class. The method he introduced, was to pick out something that sticks to you. Words, sentences and images that linger can be a place to start writing. Something already existing in the brain is waiting to be written.

I started writing through items, muses. But instead of using a thing just to start, I kept holding on to it and stayed with it. Since spring 2015, I have been working with a photograph of a woman by the sea. She, the item, the muse, got a breath of life of her own and her own presence. And an agency. Off course, she is not her real self anymore when I write her into text, but a character living in my head. (We must ask ourselves whether she does in fact *have* a real self. Is the real image of her the one she meets when a mirror appears unexpectedly in front of her? Is her own understanding of herself the most real her? The word real slips, like a small fish. When I have it in my hand, it flashes in silver, and is gone.) All of what *is*, inside and outside, can be perceived and re-dreamed. Like a photograph of a person by the sea. When I use material that is something already made, I am inventing in company. Merely being part of tradition, which is inevitable, I am reinventing something already made. Someone, maybe Duchamp, says *art is a dialogue between all artists through all times.* We are never alone when we make art. I study a photograph of a person by the sea, and, as a gift, my head is full of culture. There is never a clear moment. Layers upon layers of togetherness. After working for a long time with the project about the person by the sea, I discover that my project is the double of a book I read last year, *The Hour of The Star* by Clarice Lispector. *I see the northeastern girl looking in the mirror and – a ruffle of the drum – in the mirror appears my weary and unshaven face. We're that interchangeable. There's no doubt she's a physical person.*

**You say:** I hope you come to that project soon. I will tell the reader that you grew up in a marketing firm. You always make this hype to build expectations before the woman in your project can appear. Don't look so surprised. I know everything. We are the same person, after all.

**I say:** Please let's not talk about my personal life. About us being the same person, I would say both yes and no. What would be the fun of this conversation if that was entirely true? You and the person by the sea – I need something like a person here with me, someone to collaborate with. To have a dialogue, or dialogues. Even now, sitting in front of the text document, I read each word out loud and the sound of words is company. I will even divide myself to have someone to talk to. With conversation, the text becomes alive, and when the text is alive, it becomes an entity, its own person in a way, and I work with it as something outside me. A relief that it is not just internal, like an organ.

**You say:** Myself, I didn't speak to anyone when I painted. I had my telephone removed. If you have a discussion with someone, you get into an argument and make your point and then you are liable to say, "Pretty good point I made." Emptiness – zero when I'm painting and then eight hours later with no interruptions hopefully you've done some good painting. I had a neighbour in Galisteo who came over and said "I'm going to Santa Fe, is there anything I can bring back for you?" I said "Listen, don't you ever come back here again and don't you ever ask me if you can do anything for me." I'd rather live next door to enemies – none of these friends for me. At times, I only ate Knox gelatin mixed with orange juice and bananas.

I wanted absolutely no comfort, all I wanted was greater awareness of reality – joy and innocence.

**I say:** (Pause) This is from *The Hour of The Star*, by Clarice Lispector, the first part of *Dedication by the author*. Like me, it seems, she likes to be social when she writes. *So I dedicate this thing here to old Schumann and his sweet Clara who today alas are bones. I dedicate it to the very crimson color scarlet like my blood of a man in his prime and so I dedicate it to my blood. I dedicate it above all to the gnomes, dwarfs, sylphs, and nymphs who inhabit my life. I dedicate it to the memory of my former poverty, when everything was more sober and dignified and I had never eaten lobster. I dedicate it to the tempest of Beethoven. To the vibrations of the neutral colors of Bach. To Chopin who makes me swoon. To Stravinsky who frightened me and with whom I soared in fire. To Death and Transfiguration in which Richard Strauss reveals to me a destiny? Most of all I dedicate it to the yesterdays of today and to today, to the transparent veil of Debussy, to Marlos Nobre, to Prokofiev, to Carl Orff and Schoenberg, to the twelve-tone composers, to the strident cries of the electronic generation – to all those who reached the most alarmingly unsuspected regions within me, all those prophets of the present and who have foretold me to myself until in that instant I exploded into: I. This I that is all of you since I can't stand being just me, I need others in order to get by, fool that I am, I all askew (...)*

**You say:** (Pause) Clarice Lispector is like the graveyard. I understand that you like her, with her bleeding hearts and thought constructions that are not going to add up. And those backward, tragic girls. They lack in everything, because they are just characters. In real life

we get everything we want and need, just like the grass. It is all laid on. Fate is kind. You will look back in old age and say “I had everything I really wanted”. Whenever we see someone who has been poor all her life we think that she has been deprived but in reality she was unable to want more than she had. Her lack of potential for life limited her life. She lacked energy, zest and gratitude. Fate is kind. At every moment we are presented with happiness, the sublime, absolute perfection. We are unable to grasp it due to the pull of death, commonly known as weakness.

**I say:** I guess we can say that about – the person in the photograph by the sea. She is my muse. Like those nineteenth century women with red hair, only my muse is poor, lacking energy, zest and gratitude. A stranger and oddball in a classically composed black and white photograph. Sky, sea, rocks – and her. She is a lousy climax.



The person in the photograph has been the star of my latest projects. She lives in my head, she walks with me. She is the shape of this text too. I am tireless with her. I try to see her. Looking, I try to learn how to look. *If you want to see new things, take your walk along the same path every day.* When I look at the photograph, multiple areas in my brain alight. You see –

**You say:** Like the sea. This family at the beach have temporarily turned away from all of their troubles. This time of inspiration they will all remember. It is so simple.

**I say:** Yes! She is by the sea. That is an important point. This image would not be itself without it. She is photographed with it. With her back to it she looks at the camera. *With her back to it.* Her difficult expression and style and her indecisive leg frozen in time becomes *something... something... in front of the sea.* The sea... is so different from human culture but

it answers a wavelength inside the human mind. You can also say that about the desert, but unlike the desert, the sea is what makes our planet different from other planets. Reflecting the blue of the sky it really feels endless. The dynamics, clearness and sublimity that is the sea makes her even more human than if she was photographed together with for example her family (off course, when I now imagine her with a family, she seems even stranger, but I might not have noticed her in that constellation). The image of her is actualized by the sea. Is she not the absolute contrast to it? She even looks away from it. Maybe she looked at it right before this portrait was taken, and she felt for a vertigo moment that she *was* the sea. We never become the sea. We never clear up and write like Shakespeare. I cry sometimes when I look at the sea. Now, she is turned around toward the photographer, us, she is culture, she is so awkward and misplaced I want to hit her in the stomach. No, I don't mean that. I am just affected by *The Hour of The Star*.

**You say:** I can imagine an artist standing on the edge of town looking out while the town roars and boils behind him, never looking around, always looking out. It simply has to be that way.

**I say:** But I do not look away, I look at her. She does not look away, she looks at us. The essay *Find Your Beach* by Zadie Smith was what made me see the photograph. I had it on my wall, so I had actually already seen it, but now I unfastened it from the wall and held it in my hand, looking closely, and like I sometimes do, I disappeared into my own head with the photograph of her in my hand.

The essay is about self-realization, a concept that always makes me think of the opposite. It goes like this: find your beach, that place inside. But *she* – she has found herself a bleak beach. She will not be a *bildungsroman*. She insists on stories about negative space, not a rising and not falling either. A bedraggled stasis. But she comes out some times. Suddenly she walks down the street dressed for summer in late autumn. I close my eyes, and see her face big in the dark behind my eyes. It is not so that her eyes move in their sockets, but she radiates. She is real and not real, but she is someone. She does not say anything, but when I look at her, it is like she puts a spell on me, and my fingers on the keyboard type happily, like when I play Bach on the piano. My heart, my big feelings take over and everything moves together: My big feelings, Bach, my fingers, eyes, feet and the piano.

**You say:** I don't know why you say that. You don't play the piano anymore. But it reminds me of my second movie, after *Gabriel*. It was to be about surrender – the mental attitudes of surrender. It was going to be about the Mongol Conquest of China – I went to Japan to see kabuki actors. First, I brought the female star. She would play the princess that the Mongols took hostage. She was afraid of Genghis Khan, but eventually she married him and had two sons and went back to China. I was going to stop my movie before that – I would end it at the moment of surrender, which is happiness. I would film it in the New Mexico desert. Then, I would bring the rest of the kabuki players and I would get horses to film the parade over the mountains.

But I stopped the production. The subject of surrender got lost in the action. For a while after, I thought maybe I would bring the female star back to New Mexico and begin again, but after a year I destroyed the footage and I never made any more movies after that.

**I say:** That project seems so far from your other work. So far that it is close, maybe. A shadow double. It reminds me of the text "Self- Deception" by Jean-Paul Sartre. What

intrigues me most about it, is that in self-deception, we know something and don't know it at the same time. We have the capacity to keep a double story. Like children when they have an imaginary friend. They know that the friend is not real, and they know that the friend *is* real. And still it is a capacity and not psychosis. It is every-day. How messy intelligence is! And how inclined to fiction.

What I am searching for, what I need to do, really have to do... will be close and difficult. Something like a wet animal lying on my steps. I hit it with the door whenever I go out.

**You say:** Inspiration is really just the guide to the next thing and may be what we call success or failure. The bad paintings have to be painted and to the artist these are more valuable than those paintings later brought before the public. I always destroy the paintings that are not perfect.

(Pause) *Gabriel* was a success. It is such a simple movie. The boy is innocence itself responding to the beauty of the natural world. It is shot completely from his point of view. Every rock, pebble and plant struggling for survival amidst their harsh environment is recorded. I thought the movie was going to be about happiness, but when I saw it finished, it turned out to be about joy – the same thing my paintings are about.

**I say:** *Gabriel* is you looking. You see the boy, and then you see something else. And he responds in a certain way when you follow him and tell him what to do. The boy actor has something about him that makes you know what he should do to be the boy *Gabriel*. The person by the sea doesn't have a name, because she doesn't want one, or I think she looks like she doesn't want one.

You haven't asked me where the picture is from, but I think you want to know it, because everyone wants to know. The answer is that she is no one, other than stories and this moment in the photograph. She is a piece of reality unfastened from its connection. The place is nowhere. We cannot accept it, because it is absurd. I make stories for her, but she never stops being someone else too. Nothing can exist in its own world. There is no pure fiction; everything is attached to something. I will tell you what I know. I just found her at the Mauerpark flea-market in Berlin. The photograph was in one of the many boxes of photographs that have been discarded from private lives. An odd thing is that there is a demand for these photographs. They are not cheap. I don't know what people do with them.

**You say:** We may be looking at the ocean when we are aware of beauty but it is not the ocean. We may be in the desert and we say that we are aware of the "living desert" but it is not the desert.



The voice of Agnes, *You*, in this text is a reworking of the written material in *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances* by Arne Glimcher. I have cut and pasted, rewritten and added to it. I have used it freely and irreverently as material to shape a character and generate a dialogue. It is a method much resembling how I worked with the photograph of a person by the sea. The texts by and about Agnes Martin have the function of muse and framework for this text.

*(...) If you imagine that you're a rock  
rock of ages cleft from me  
let me hide myself in thee  
You don't have to worry  
if you can imagine that you're a rock  
all your troubles fall away  
It's consolation  
Sand is better  
You're so much smaller as a grain of sand  
We are so much less  
My paintings are about freedom from the cares of this world  
from worldliness (...)*

Agnes Martin

Anita Loe

Friday 6. November 19:30 - 21:00 Galleri Bokboden, Marken 37b, Bergen

# WOMAN ON A ROCKY BEACH

**SOMETHING MIGHT HAPPEN AT 20:00**

The astronaut put on her big suit and sealed the zippers. From the doorway of the ship, she stepped into space and floated off. Her head did not explode after some time had passed, like in the movies. She will bob around out there as long as she is feeling goofy.

Is she filling her void with anything? The answer is as much yes as it is no, and perhaps this is the problem. The spacious border between yes and no where she has decided to stay, with a good outfit and curly hairdo on a rocky beach. Shall she put her leg back down or over her knee? She has been stuck there for who knows how long. It is a relief to know that everything must change eventually and at any time.

Now, this autumn, the planets are aligning to a pattern that shows promise and the wind brings with it a feeling that something will move out of its place. I am almost sure there might be something to it.

**BE THERE TO WITNESS SOMETHING THIS FRIDAY NIGHT AT 20:00**

Why not (There are many reasons why not, but there always are. Then why go out the door ever, why have a door in your house)? Bring your fine tuned senses and your greatest and lowest expectations

**FRIDAY NIGHT** and have a drink with the others who ventured to take the trip.



## Itinerary

- Lea and Tomas come to the school building before 20:00
- The costume is in a bag in the bathroom
- Lea changes and is ready at 20:00
  
- Anita calls when they can begin walking, between 20:00 and 20:10.
- It takes between 3 and 4 minutes to walk to the intersection
- Courtney and Johanna starts readying the equipment:
  - Loudspeakers on each side of the door
  - Umbrellas over the speakers and weights on the handles on the umbrella
  - Anita receives the cord for the telephone and plugs it in
  - The cord-spool and lamp are carried outside, under the big umbrella
  - Position is taken with backs to the fence and where there is not a car parked
  
- Lea calls Anita when she is at the intersection. Anita picks up the phone, says hello and hangs up
- Lea gives her jacket, telephone and umbrella to Tomas and starts walking towards the gallery
- Tomas walks another way to meet Lea afterwards
- Lea walks in a normal tempo down to Rema 1000, and from there she walks slowly
- When about 40 seconds have passed from Lea called, Anita starts the music
  
- After about 40 seconds more, Lea is visible from the gallery**
- Courtney turns on the light spot a bit after the music starts or when she sees Lea**
- Lea walks slowly down the street with the light spot on her**
- She walks past the gallery without looking at us**
- When Lea is about to turn around the corner hedge, Courtney turns off the light**
- Lea disappears around the hedge**
- The music tunes out**
  
- Tomas meets Lea on the next corner with her jacket, umbrella, phone and a towel
- Courtney and Johanna carry the equipment back inside after a few minutes



Video still from live event, *Woman on a Rocky Beach*





*New York City, Amani Willett.*  
Illustration photo for *Find Your Beach*, essay by Zadie Smith in *The New Yorker*.

## Footnotes

### **Cover page: Found photograph**

#### **Page 3: *Can we be alone and human at the same time?***

*Persona*, Ingmar Bergman

Produced by AB Svensk filmindustri, Sverige 1966

Here translated to English by me

#### **Page 8: *In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you.***

Fake Buddha Quotes

<http://fakebuddhaquotes.com/in-the-end-only-three-things-matter/>, 14.03.2016

#### **Page 8: *a breath of life***

*A Breath of Life*, Clarice Lispector

Published by New Directions, New York 2012

Translated to English by Johnny Lorenz

#### **Page 10: Found photograph**

#### **Page 10: *If you want to see new things, take your walk along the same path every day.***

Quote with unknown origin.

#### **Page 11: *she puts a spell on me***

*I Put a Spell on You*, Song written by Jay Hawkins

From the album *At Home with Screamin' Jay Hawkins*

Label: Epic records, released 1958

#### **Page 14: From *The Untroubled Mind*, Agnes Martin**

Transcribed by Ann Wilson from conversations with Agnes Martin in summer 1972

*Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, Arne Glimcher

Published by Phaidon Press Limited, London 2012

#### **Page 15: Poster for the project *Woman on a Rocky Beach***

The project *Woman on a Rocky Beach* was exhibited at Galleri Bokboden 6<sup>th</sup> of November 2015.

#### **Page 18: Video documentation by Kobie Nel**

**Attached PDF file (Loe Kunst 2016 2):** Text zine, *Woman on a Rocky Beach*, 2015

## Primary sources

### **1 *Remembrance of things past, Swanns Way, Marcel Proust***

Published by Random House USA Inc., USA 1994

Translated to English by C. K. Scott Moncrieff

### **2 *Agnes Martin: With my back to the world, Mary Lance***

Produced by New Deal Film Inc., USA 2002

### **3 *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances, Arne Glimcher***

Published by Phaidon Press Limited, London 2012

### **4 *Et eget rom (A Room of One`s Own), Virginia Woolf***

Published by Bokklubben dagens bøker, Oslo 1999

Here translated to English by me

### **5 *A Breath of Life, Clarice Lispector***

Published by New Directions, New York 2012

Translated to English by Johnny Lorenz

### **6 *Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre, Walter Kaufmann***

Published by Plume, Penguin Group (USA) Inc., USA 1956

### **7 *Before the Law, Franz Kafka***

The Complete Stories, Franz Kafka

Published by Schocken Books Inc., New York 1971

Translated to English by Willa and Edwin Muir

### **8 *Tradition and the Individual Talent: An Essay, T.S. Eliot***

[https://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/Tradition and the Individual Talent](https://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/Tradition_and_the_Individual_Talent),  
21.03.2016

### **9 *Confessions, St. Augustine of Hippo***

Translated to English by Albert C. Outler

<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/conf.pdf>, 21.03.2016

### **10 *Sara, darling, Interview with Sara Stridsberg by Vegard Bye***

Aschehoug Litteratur, 2015

Here translated to English by me

[https://issuu.com/aschehoug/docs/aschehoug\\_litteratur v r 2015?e=2026704/10918303](https://issuu.com/aschehoug/docs/aschehoug_litteratur_v_r_2015?e=2026704/10918303),  
14.03.2016

### **11 *The Hour of the Star, Clarice Lispector***

Published by New Directions Paperback, New York 2011

Translated to English by Benjamin Moser

### **12 *Find Your Beach, essay by Zadie Smith***

The New Yorker, 2014

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/10/23/find-your-beach/>, 14.03.2016

### **13 *Self-Deception, Jean-Paul Sartre***

*Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann

Published by Plume, Penguin Group (USA) Inc., USA 1956

Translated to English by Hazel Barnes

### **14 *New York City, photo by Amani Willett***

Illustration for the essay *Find Your Beach*, by Zadie Smith

The New Yorker, 2009

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/10/23/find-your-beach/>, 14.03.2016

**15 *Coming To Writing and Other Essays*, Hélène Cixous**

Published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge/London 1991

Translated by Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers

**16 *Night Sea*, Agnes Martin**

Oil on canvas with gold leaf, 72 x 72 IN, 1963

<https://www.sfmoma.org/exhibition/approaching-american-abstraction/>, 14.03.2016

## Further Reading

### **1 *Notes From Underground*, Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

Published by Everyman's Library, London 2004

Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky

### **2 *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes**

Published by Hill Wang, New York 2010

Translated to English by Richard Howard

### **3 *Interview with Clarice Lispector***

TV Cultura Sao Paolo 1977

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1zwGLBpULs>, 14.03.2016

### **4 *Untitled Film Still series*, Cindy Sherman**

1977 – 1980

<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/cindysherman/gallery/2/mobile.php>, 14.03.2016

### **5 The work of Bas Jan Ader**

<http://www.basjanader.com/>, 14.03.2016

### **6 *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley**

Published by Bounty Books, London 2015

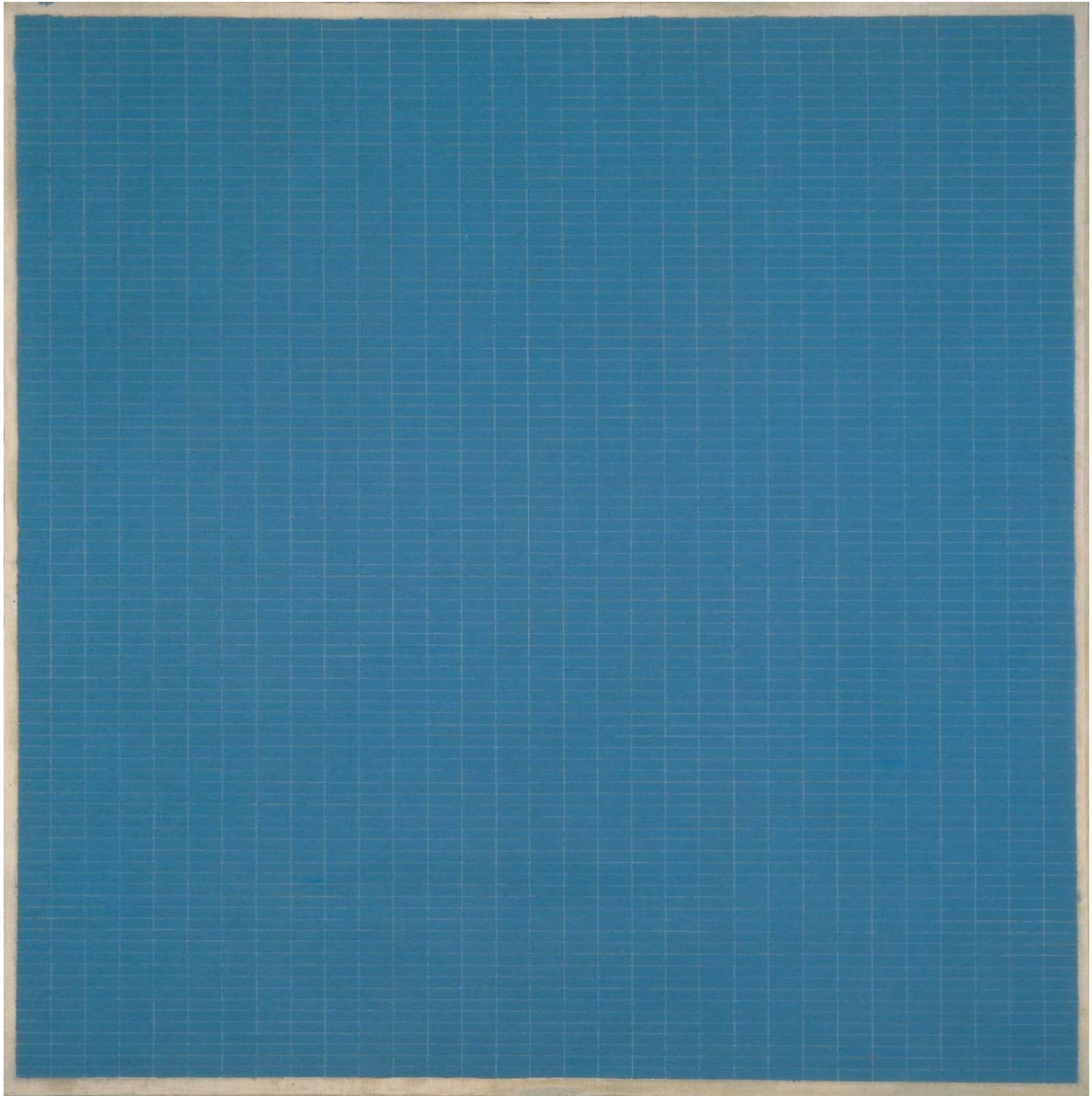


*What had reached me, so powerfully cast from a human body, was Beauty: there was a face, with all the mysteries inscribed and preserved on it; I was before it, I sensed that there was a beyond, to which I did not have access, an unlimited place. The look incited me and also forbade me to enter; I was outside, in a state of animal watchfulness. A desire was seeking its home. I was that desire. I was the question. The question with this strange destiny: to seek, to pursue the answers that will appease it, that will annul it. What prompts it, animates it, makes it want to be asked, is the feeling that the other is there, so close, exists, so far away; the feeling that somewhere, in some part of the world, once it is through the door, there is the face that promises, the answer for which one continues to move onward, because of which one can never rest, for the love of which one holds back from renouncing, from giving in – to death. Yet what misfortune if the question should happen to meet its answer! Its end!*

*I adored the Face. The smile. The countenance of my day and night. The smile awed me, filled me with ecstasy. With terror. The world constructed, illuminated, annihilated by a quiver of this face. This face is not a metaphor. Face, space, structure. Scene of all the faces that give births to me, contain my lives. I read the face, I saw and contemplated it to the point of losing myself in it. How many faces to the face? More than one. Three, four, but always the only one, and the only one always more than one.*

*I read it: the face signified. And each sign pointed out a new path. To follow, in order to come closer to its meaning. The face whispered something to me, it spoke and called on me to speak, to uncode all the names surrounding it, evoking it, touching on it, making it appear. It made things visible and legible, as if it were understood that even if the light were to fade away, the things it had illuminated would not disappear, what it had fallen on would stay, not cease to be here, to glow, to offer itself up to the act of naming again.*

Hélène Cixous, *Coming To Writing and Other Essays*



*Night Sea*, Agnes Martin