Letter to a Lost Friend

by XXXX

I keep attempting to start a correspondence with people
but they end up not being interested in me,
either that or I scare them away
because I usually begin with:
“Well, my favorite philosopher is Hegel,”
and usually they have nothing to say about Hegel,
which really is what separates me
from my father's dogs or my desk drawer;
that is, the knowledge of Hegel—
but I condescend, as is the minimum of my manners,
and I say: Well, what did you do today?

I've spoken with a German who likes rap.
He never got back to me.
I've spoken with a Filipina
who is also an editor of a popular kids' magazine in Manila;
she stopped when I mentioned I spend my time reading Aquinas.
I played chess with a Mexican in Canada.
I lost and he subsequently disregarded me.

To them, I mention you
as “a handsome but deeply flawed Englishman.”
One cannot help but ask to be more specific:
Do I mean some son of landed gentry?
Worse, of course.

In my “immediate correspondences,”
that is, whenever I go out,
I usually have a good time
but find the depth of the conversation lacking;
this is the result of conversing
without the mediation of the written word:

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it is all just vulgarity if we speak as soon as we think.
We might as well be Capuchin monkeys
asking to be fucked or for some peanut or something.
I find myself looking for a distant correspondent.
I fail miserably each time.

Lately, I've been fussing with my evenings,
completely undecided
as to with which activities I should preoccupy myself.
Books lay unfinished on my desk,
and I am simultaneously writing at least three pieces.
I have unplayed video games,
unopened even from their packaging,
films I have yet to watch,
restaurants I've yet to eat at—
generally, my life is yet to be lived, even.
Without an audience in the form of a correspondence,
I fail to see the point.

Now, my friend the other day asked me in the car
while we were stuck in traffic:
What has happened to you since we last met?
Ah, but you see, apart from the usual drama of people my age,
a few days ago I read a passage from Kierkegaard
that equated universality with duty,
universality with happiness,
and therefore happiness with duty—
a pristine and wonderful argument
that subverts individuality and particularity, &c., &c.—
but I could not tell her
because she is my intellectual inferior,
and so I ended up telling her instead
about a new song I wrote for the ukulele.

I don't tell you this in search of a response.

You are unreliable, ungrateful, and selfish.
Manners merely protect a more perfect indifference in you;
and your thrashing of whatever affection I had for you
was done in a manner so virtuoso in execution
that I sometimes wonder if you achieved it
through practice or genius.

I say this because I know you will read it and understand.
No one else has a catalogue
of my failures and loneliness
that is so comprehensive.

The subject is a project, goes the existentialists;
thus, observe how these hands threaten my jugular
with the blade-like, hooked edge of the “I”!
It is my greatest work, yet unfinished,
but ongoing so long as I suffer to live.