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The oldest fate of a dragon

Darling, you think it is love, it is just a midnight journey

Joseph Brodsky

I was five years old when I discovered death was forever. I was hugging my teddy bear before lunch when my mother burst into a violent nervous breakdown. My first impulse was to run the other way and crash into the wall. She screamed and twisted on the floor while I squeezed my bear's head. My father didn't know what to do; almost 25 years later, he still doesn't know whom to save. It must be so hard for a man to have a wife and daughter, especially when both are crying. That day, I discovered my mother could die, and that she, like anyone else, might also long for it. I do not want to make you sad with these episodes. I just want to point out that we all have a past, a trigger, a private holiday on which we commemorate the birth of black holes. We are born a second time when we learn that our emotions exist separate and apart from other people's, at the same time that they join us in a common web. From this moment forward, our vocation will be to feel.

With regard to my work, there's not much more I need to explain: I am a writer of short fiction and poetry. With it, I insist on portraying how the life of a character—or the poetic voice—can be a hell, a place where it is no longer desirable to live. My hope is to convince the reader that everything I've written is true, and my strategy is to convince him I too lived his past. As a reader I operate in a similar way; I do not want to be forced into an obvious or redundant drama, but if some kind of dramatic shock does not reach me at all then I consider it a failure. Literature, and art in general, can be considered a laboratory of emotive chemistry, a mirror in which the prince is a dragon and where the dragon cries because it broke a fingernail. A place where people stop asking about the princess.

But I'm worried, I love being worried.

Suddenly, one day, we were free. It was okay to share one's feelings out loud, make a huge mistake, and put on a show for others. We get divorces, mental illnesses of medium caliber that don't confine you to an asylum, but rather give you some prestige (I've been to parties where people boast about their new cars and psychiatrists). We gained a territory, where freed of conventional ties, we are able to build new walls of containment, or rupture ourselves from the rest of the world through our self-seduction and narcissism, which then allows us to believe we can rewrite the course of history.

But is it true that we feel? When I think of the relationship we adopt with books, music, cinema—in which they act as a crutch to help us advance through the days—I wonder if we have any intrinsic emotional nature, or if we merely develop this toxic ability to perform our emotions in the various scenarios and outlets provided to us by our social networks, in which we have not only the right but almost the duty to show that we feel anything at all. The act of forming opinions, dissenting, putting our feelings on display, acquires a face so repressive and superficial that it should lead us to once again question the concept of freedom. Sometimes I feel that it's because we are bored that we need this stage to bring our ghosts to life before later discovering that we're absolutely empty.

When I stop to recall how in my country—and in others as well—people were ready to vote for men capable of harming others, I begin to wonder if the problem is not one of intelligence

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and education, but rather a matter of our fundamentally broken emotional nature, in spite of the books, songs, movies, and happy Facebook posts that suggest otherwise.

Can we trust a creature in need of help to feel? Can we trust beings that need training to be human?