

Intro:

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The Story of a Dream Named Literature

Literature ...What is literature? Could it be a mysterious seventh sense, or is it some sort of sensor-laden skin, a bizarre tentacle through which we can feel out the indomitable monster called Reality? Could it be the sling by which we aim at an invisible Goliath that challenges us in the dark only, without us ever being able to confront it in reality? Could it be the pause between two heartbeats, the death before the next intake of air? And if so, where does its heart lie? Does it have one? Can it carry Life within?

Or perhaps it's just a huge coat displaying a lot of pockets where we can stock a lot of juicy trifles, moldy pieces of memory, nut-tasting dreams and other crumbs off the royal feast? Or could it be just a bin where we go fly-tipping nightmares, cold sweats, frissons, amputated souls, indeed crumbs kept in the fridge that are already non-edible leftovers, wounds wherefrom all the blood of our unanswerable questions flows? Or is it a mega-soup on the backburner, where destinies, be they real or imaginary boil, until the mere carcass is left? Where we place starshine and sinful darkness, in the hopes of obtaining Life in the athanor where the amorphous lead of our dreams lies? For the alchemy-driven gold of this amalgam is Life itself, and the reality effect it creates, no matter how hard we tried to lie to ourselves by coming up with yet another definition.

Literature is definitely one of the most ravishing illusions ... And everything we do is in order for us to obtain the unattainable taste for life. Life: we have no clue what it is, where does it come from and whereto is it going? We can only guess ...But its taste we know for sure. No one can fool us. We know it and it's recognizable to us anytime. It's something that we cannot ever confuse with something else: it's not fluid, nor is it sticky and yet it flows, it's in flux. Life is by no means

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sturdy, we cannot even see it and yet we can break our head when there's an encounter. Life is dissimilar to the air we breathe; however, it can elevate us, it can make us fly, although we have no wings for that.

As regards its taste, Life is neither entirely bitter, although we can feel its bitterness at times, nor is it entirely sweet, a delight to the taste buds, it's neither sour, although it makes our mouth cringe when we least expect it. And indeed, it can be hot as well ...it sets us on fire, as it were, at times ...It's all of this at the same time, and beyond all this, something else: and that something else is the mysterious taste, the ingredient that holds them all together, and that is meant to make us dizzy, all the while leaving us speechless. We can guard ourselves of this paralysis, using the very words.

This mysterious ingredient, latent in all our cells and in our blood is recognizable in our very dreams, as Life does not cease to bother us either. Perhaps neither in death, as Life is not spoken, but lived, but we have come up with a sort of language, a tool by which we try to distill it, to turn it into some sort of essence ...Yes, indeed literature is a dream of ours, a dream where Life seeks to haunt us, luring us, breathing us in, biting us, as it needs perpetual renewal, recreation.

Literature is a toothed form, as it bites off content, it's like an oil-padded jar where we pour the water of life and it does not adhere at all. We at times have a sip, and for a while we really do get the impression that we have nailed it, as it were, that we have succeeded to capture its sacred nature, only to have its paradise-informed taste vanish a minute later, and therefore the taste of life recedes into the void wherefrom it had sprung. And we thus feel outsmarted again. Hmm, it was clearly a fake. We have come, yet again, across a fake, perhaps more credible than the rest. All the ingredients were there, indeed, but the one mysterious ingredient was missing.

There are, however, some fakes that can really capture the mysterious ingredient in their fabric of flavors, and they give the impression of 'the total perfume'. Those, we call masterpieces. A masterpiece in fact means: one cannot do better than that. Literature is all about day-dreaming, it's a beautiful illusion, but still an illusion. We have invented a plethora of words, but never enough words for us to build that folly, that crazy architecture that defies the senses and our capacity for comprehension and creation. And that is called Life. That overwhelmingly beautiful folly does not even have a name, it is us that

calls it Life, but how else could you name totality?

And in the meantime, while we were using words, that enabled us to tell a story, we equally understood that what we can merely do with words is to express our awe. It's as if you had the ambition of recreating the ocean and its grandeur by using colored paper, as if you wished to render the brightness of the sky by using tinsel. If we were gifted enough, we could obtain a rare perfume, but if not, then only some common broth. But it is what is! Nobody can say we haven't tried ...

And the books? Some of us have thus become book-eaters, we devour books. Some of them are just edible and easily digested. Some others are not. You had better leave in on the plate, as you run the risk of indigestion and that's hardly desirable. And then you can only regret the time and money wasted. Other books are good, nice, you devour them, but you're not entirely convinced that all the ingredients were top quality. You'll never order that dish again. Enough is enough, you'll never tick that on the menu again. The experience has not been repelling, nor has it been exceedingly appetizing. In other words, it's been lukewarm. It gave off some smoke, but no fire, it's been moving, but not quite cathartic. It's nothing like the madness that you, as a reader, have dreamed of, as it's not only the writers who dream, but it's also the readers as well. It's time, therefore, you tried another restaurant, with a more promising menu and you already envisage yourself sniffing the enthralling flavors of royal gastronomy ... You are a fast-food and beer consumer, but keep on trying ... You are influenced by advertising (you'd better not be), you're searching for blue ribbon products having exotic names, but unfortunately you could come across some more fast food in disguise, covered in sauce. It looks like the marketing strategy has been way better than the one at the food stalls ... But you're not so easily fooled. You try again, and then you could miraculously come across something that you cannot put your finger on. It's no longer food, it's but a flavor yielding the taste of heaven, the total perfume that you savor with all your senses, body and soul and you then know that you don't even have all the senses to capture its entire beauty, that indeed you should dilate your senses somehow, in order to be able to experience all this overwhelming waterfall of fragrance.

You have thus stepped over the threshold: you have stepped into the immaterial dimension of perfumes. You can immediately realize that this kind of perfume is out of this world, albeit reconstructing it. It

molds that sacred folly that is Life; however, it is otherworldly. You cannot distill Life therefrom. You have felt its aerial taste, you have savored its magnificent drunkenness and it has become your own. You want to have some more of it, you sip its perfume and you know for sure that you're never going to get indigestion. You suddenly realize that you have come across the food of angels and that it was only possible for a madman to mold folly.

You now think about its author, as Salieri would think about Mozart. You curse him in all love and respect and admiration. It has made you drunk by one sip only. You now know that he's a skillful thief, a great mystery hunter and that he has stolen some crumbs off the table of the gods. You also know that it's not for everybody to be a peeping Tom, and moreover to be able to see something in that blinding light. He has brought to the table something that he himself cannot comprehend, but he has succeeded to do so. How could he comprehend? He's only human, after all.

There are but a few of these people, and we call them gifted writers or otherwise, geniuses. We call the otherworldly perfumes masterpieces and that's the end of this classifying endeavor. We can always find a word for everything. Each perfume is unique in its own way, but we cast them all aside in the same category. And the author? We hail him as the greatest author of such and such an age. So, we have solved that as well. Using three or four words, we have succeeded in naming the divine perfume that has made us go crazy. That's some performance! And so is analyzing the masterpiece, by dissecting it, in order for us to be able to describe its components and the ingredients it's made of. Those types of dissection, that is meant to measure the ineffable with the appropriate finesse are equally rare.

In the long run, all books are stories; any book is a word-based kind of architecture that attempts the impossible: more specifically, to capture reality, failing at times, and only succeeding to create its own reality. That's nice, but that won't do. Life is to be lived, not spoken about. Life has a language of its own: it's called living. Literature, on the other hand, has another type of language; the written word. You cannot vanquish the monster unless you are one of those wizards who can teach words how to breathe, how to dance and speak, as they are skillful alchemists and gifted tamers.

We, humans have so many books because started narrating life,

retelling reality when we realized that it was totally impossible for us to fully comprehend it, when we became aware of its monstrous force. When we felt overwhelmed, we became beauty hunters. We got obsessed with chimeras. Any narrative thus became a desperate chase of the present moment in the tumble that leads to death. Any textualization is some type of folly that endeavors to speak about a bubbling grand madness called reality.

And thus began the great hunt ... Catching a dinosaur by using a butterfly net. Or to make the dragon fit into a tiny jewelry casket. To freeze motion by keeping the life within. To enclose the ocean in a jam jar. To gather fragrances into a basket and then to distill it all into some perfume. What is literature, after all? It's a gift of some kind, that a joy peddler sells you. And all this made of some raw material, some amorphous matter, barbaric as the mud, hammered into form. And infinitely recycled: that is the written word.

And in the process, lo! and behold! We have populated the world with words, whilst entertaining the illusion that perhaps they'll outlive us. All this because, at some point we have remarked that objects tend to outlive us: buildings do outlive us, even drawings of images do, as well as rocks and trees do. All that does not breathe outlives us and we are the frailest of beings, we are mere stardust. However, we can leave words behind, we can flood the world with words. They fail to breathe, but they can create the effect of breathing. If you are a good enough hunter, you can make them mimic the very turmoil of life, even though they are but soulless matter. You can grab the minotaur by its horns and fling it down to the ground. You can challenge the dragon to dueling and chop off all of its heads, one at a time. You can aim at Goliath with the proverbial sling and make him fall. This kind of paradox is what we call literature.

All this because we, humans, have understood a crucial fact: we cannot entirely comprehend all, however, we can tell a story; we fail to see the meaning of it all, but we can strive to create meaning. Words are but raw material, as rocks are, but they can become an extension of self. They thus become that mysterious boundary between two heartbeats, that sacred space between life and death, without ever being one or the other.