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Writing as Critical Inquiry

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Education in Love Story

Love is one of the ficklest yet most crucial constituents of human emotions. People’s love stories vary from each other. Some might be joyful. Some might be miserable. However, stories of first love are almost always meaningful and, in some cases, educational to one’s life.

My first love story is probably similar to most other people’s: torturous, winding, bad-ending. In fact, it teaches me a fair amount of lessons that make me rethink who I am and what I should be doing. Throughout my childhood, I have never been through any setback as grief-making and heart-breaking, yet also reflecting, as this breakup experience with my first love. It could well be my biggest education outside of the classroom in the recent past. What it makes me realize is that the impact of it outweighs any of my parents’ or school’s lessons. I have a huge socio-philosophical growth of my mindset and my true self.

My ex-girlfriend and I knew each other online and met each other in an NYU meeting held for newly admitted international students in the Class of 2025 in Shanghai. We spent some time together afterward. We went out to watch a movie together and she took my first kiss, which I had zero expectations of. I was not her first love but I did not care about it too much. Instead, I was hoping for a bright future, but things did not go that way.

Lookingfrom today’s hindsight, though some of those memories are sweet, they are not worth it. She and I should not have fallen in love at the beginning because we are mentally not fit at all. She was open while I was reserved. She had strong opinions while I generally did not. She studied at the NYU Shanghai campus last semester and I was in NYC. We had arguments every day on tiny things in life for no reason, probably because of the thousands of miles of physical distance and the escalating mistrust between us. Within a month, she broke up with me. I reflected on my first love, examined my mistakes, and learned from them. From then on, I tried to tune myself to live a new life.

“The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another, reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on for ever to animate the last fibre of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight”(Emerson, 4).

Emerson hereby suggests the idea of reductionism. In the previous sentences, he uses the example of physics, chemistry, and science to argue that the universe is all about patterns and classifications, reduced to tiny parts of the system. Philosophically, the soul is the keystone of one’s own universe. If one has deep insight, he is able to discover their own “constitution” and control them. At that moment, I lost my insight and therefore lost control of things around me. I could have avoided everything if my insight was deep enough to distinguish the huge difference between my soul and hers.

“Oppression – overwhelming control – is necrophilic”(Freire, 248). Freire argues that oppression kills the potential for growth and advocates the dead - the passive, static belief. Freire’s words are a reminder for me to stop oppressing myself and being “necrophilic” about the dead love. They encourage me to release myself and look forward.

I keep telling myself encouraging words like Freire’s. "Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened"(Dr. Seuss). I start to accept what has happened and love the new life I am about to live. I am pleased that I am able to learn from such a failure of love. "The hottest love has the coldest end"(Socrates). As Socrates says, love is so unpredictable that it may result in the opposite direction. I cannot control everything. I have tried my best, there is nothing to regret and that is enough.

I also learn that I must only spend my time and energy on things that truly deserve my attention and that are more meaningful in life. I must respect and love myself prior to others. "Never allow someone to be your priority while allowing yourself to be their option"(Mark Twain). This is the epigram that I keep telling myself. I should have not let her be my priority because she treats me exactly like an “option” that is ready to be discarded at any moment. I realize that when something goes wrong in a relationship and mild attempts to fix it have failed, I should immediately pause and draw myself out rather than forcing myself to handle it.

When she came to NYC this semester, trying to get back together with me again, I relentlessly refused her, in an attempt to prevent making the same mistake again. The love between me and her should never exist. “A broken mirror can’t be put back together without cracks”, I told her, "We are never ever, ever getting back together"(Taylor Swift, *We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together*).

Work Cited

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