

These days, when reading most analytical or critical non-fiction, I find it very difficult to force myself to engage with whatever it is that I am reading. The affinity and fascination that I once had for using all these words to express novel observations and ideas about someone else's work, this spark has somehow died, or perhaps been replaced with something else. Where there was once an infatuation with intellect and ideas, an addiction to the immense satisfaction of connecting those ideas in clever and unexpected ways, there is now this irrepressible need to create just those works that I had never previously understood despite all my articulate analyses of them. In the world of vague and inarticulate sentiment, where words are not a tool for expression but the oppressive bars of expression's steel cage, there is something mocking about analysis. Whether it critiques or praises is irrelevant, analysis anyhow takes the artist's work and trivializes it, toys with it, all for the entertainment of the critic and the critic's peers who will all critique each others critiques in dizzying circles. It is thus that the critic, the analyst, the commentator, the philosopher, all seem to miss the forest for the trees, thinking about feeling, but not feeling those feelings.

These are very serious charges that I lay against so many perfectly decent folks. Taken at face value, my words are irreverent and inflammatory, unjustifiably sensational. But you see, that's just the point. You can read my ideas and disagree with them and you could even write your own little essay about why you disagree with my ideas and we could have so much fun, constructing and de(con)structing all this web of ideas. But, at the end of the day, would we have understood each other any better? Not really, but at least we'll have had a masochistic sort of fun, which I concede is a perfectly valid justification for the whole ordeal, as long as we are not deceiving ourselves on this point and pretending that our wordplay was for anything more than that.

For some of us though, these games have grown worn out and exhausting. All these intellectual games of subjective truth are a painful reminder of what once was but can no longer be enjoyed. In writing this little piece now, I am constantly fighting the battle within myself, hesitating at every word with the knowledge that these words do not represent my internal truth. Ideas in words are fallible and deniable, experiences and emotions are not. In writing fiction, one does not make the implicit claim that their words represent a truth that is up for contention, the writer is liberated from the burden of correctness. The writer of fiction, however, is still subject to the pain and alienation of all the attacks they make themselves vulnerable to. In laying out the portrait of themselves so plainly, they let their own narcissism, perversion, repression, insecurity, and immaturity be easy targets. The point is not to coddle the poor writer of fiction and look past their flaws, the point is simply to realize that their art requires a courage not found in the analysis of it.

This unshakable feeling of having outgrown something is, admittedly, a treacherous trap to fall into. It is as the old man who laments the loss of his childhood innocence, how it is just this lamentation that condemns him to it. After all, one is constantly outgrowing themselves, there is nothing special about the present. To get out of the trap, one must take their own

narrative less seriously, be willing to laugh at it and, more importantly, be willing to listen to narratives outside of oneself. Sometimes, taking things less seriously means taking very seriously things that seem unserious. This is hard to do, but he just might have enjoyed it by

the end.