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“Comme ça pour le plaisir...”

Abstract

“Comme ça pour le plaisir...” is a quotation taken from *The Little Prince* of Antoine de Saint - Exupéry that in a few words summarizes the subjects I want to discuss. Is there only pleasure in creative activities? How much creativity is related with painful parts of our inner world? More in specific: has writing to do with separation issues?

In the first part of my paper I will try to answer to the above questions exploring some psychoanalytical concepts, their relationship with creativity and in particular with writing. I will therefore deepen Sigmund’s Freud’s notion of sublimation, Donald W. Winnicott’s concept of transitional object and Melanie Klein’s ideas about reparation of destroyed internal objects.

In the second part of the paper, instead, I will talk about the *Edizioni PulcinoElefante* that is a unique case of creative writing and Publishing House. I will also propose some examples of the exhibitions I have organized where the work and the books of this publishing house have been showed.

Keywords

Sublimation – transitional object- reparation – Edizioni PulcinoElefante

“Comme ça pour le plaisir...”

Et quand tu seras consolé (on se console toujours) tu seras content de m'avoir connu. Tu seras toujours mon ami. Tu auras envie de rire avec moi. Et tu ouvriras parfois ta fenêtre, comme ça, pour le plaisir... Et tes amis seront bien étonnés de te voir rire en regardant le ciel. Alors tu leur diras: ‘Oui, les étoiles, ça me fait toujours rire !’ Et ils te croiront fou”.	"And when you are comforted (time soothes all sorrows) you will be happy to have known me. You will always be my friend. You will want to laugh with me. And from time to time you will open your window, just for the pleasure . . . And your friends will be astonished to see you laughing whilst gazing at the sky! And so will say to them, 'Yes, stars always make me laugh!'
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Antoine de Saint- Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*,
(1943)

And they will think you are crazy".

Antoine de Saint- Exupéry, *The Little Prince*,
(1995)



First Part

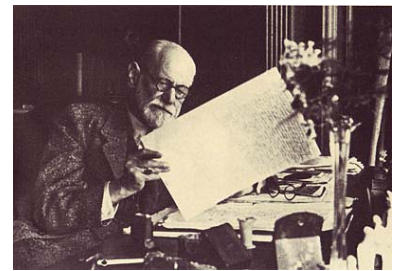
Is there only pleasure in creative activities? How much creativity is related with painful parts of our inner world? More in specific: has writing to do with separation issues? In the first part of the paper I will try to answer to the above questions using some well known psychoanalytical concepts.

The structure of the first part of this paper is inspired by the medieval Hebrew literary device called *Melitzah*ⁱ in which “a mosaic of fragments and phrases from the Hebrew bible as well as from rabbinic literature or the liturgy is fitted together to form a new statement of what the author intends to express at the moment. *Melitzah*, in effect recalls Walter Benjamin’sⁱⁱ desire to someday write a work composed entirely by quotations. At any rate, it was a literary device employed widely in medieval Hebrew poetry and prose, then through the movement known as *Haskalah* (Hebrew for “enlightenment”) and even among nineteenth- century writers both modern and traditional.

For this reason the text is a kind of collection of quotations of most prominent psychoanalysts that at the end should give some clues to better understand the origin of creativity.

Quite obviously, I’ll start with Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, that already in his 1907 essay *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* writes some very interesting things about this subject:

“Should we not look for the first traces of imaginative activity as early as in childhood? The child’s best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, rearranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him? It would be wrong to think he does not take that world seriously; on the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotion on it. The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality; and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world. This linking is all that differentiates the child’s ‘play’ from ‘fantasying’. The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of fantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality”.



Freud introduces also the concept of sublimation that is borrowed from chemistry where it means the transition of a substance from the solid phase to the gas phase.

Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis in their book *The language of Psychoanalysis* summarize very well what he meant: “Process postulated by Freud to account for human activities which have no apparent connection with sexuality but which are assumed to be motivated by the force of sexual instinct. The main types of activities described by Freud as sublimated are artistic creation and intellectual enquiry. The instinct is said to be sublimated in so far as it is diverted towards a new non-sexual aim and in so far as its objects are socially valued ones”.



In this regard, **Louise Bourgeois**, a great artist who has recently passed away, in an interview by Donald Kuspit says:

“Art is a privilege, a blessing, a relief... I had to pursue it, even more than the privilege of having children... The privilege was the access to unconscious. It is a fantastic privilege to have access to unconscious. I had to be worthy of this privilege, and to exercise it. I was a privilege also to be able to sublimate. A lot of people cannot



sublimate. They have no access to their unconscious. There is something very special in being able to sublimate... and something very painful in the access to it. But there is no escape... and no escape from access once it is given to you, once you are favored with it, whether you want it or not”.



Melanie Klein formulated the theory that art and creativity have to do with the reparation of a destroyed internal object.

From her point of view, artistic creativity is:

- A reaction to an unconscious destructive trend that occurs in the first stages of the child development. She refers to two phases or positions: schizo - paranoid and depressive (1957).

- An impulse experienced by the infant to repair the object that had been initially split into good/bad and attacked during the paranoid phase.

- Therefore initially curative but goes together with the representation of a unified object (depressive position). In this sense art can have a defensive and adaptive function.

The artist, by producing a work of art, recreates the object unconsciously destroyed in fantasy and thus atones for the destruction (1965).

Donald Woods Winnicott suggests instead the concepts of transitional objects and transitional phenomena.

The terms ‘transitional objects’ and ‘transitional phenomena’ are used to designate “the intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral erotism and the true object relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has already been introjected (...)”.



“It is not the object, of course, that is transitional: the object represents the infant’s transition from a state of being merged to the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something separate (...).

“The third part of the life of a human being, a part we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contributes. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting –place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated (...).



Transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion which is at the basis of initiation of experience. This early stage of development is made possible by the mother’s special capacity for making adaption to the needs of her infant, thus allowing the infant the illusion that what the infant creates really exists.

This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant’s experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work (...)

To summarize the first part:

On the basis of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein and Donald Woods Winnicott’s ideas one could say

that creativity is not only related with painful parts of our inner world, but also with aggressive and sometimes perverse impulses.

With regard to writing, it looks as the specific slowness and action of writing has to do with separation issues and mourning.

Separation between words and sentences, between the black of the characters and the white of the empty page, as well as more in general between the full and the empty, the inside and the outside.

Second Part

Poetry is the dress of the mind

In this part of the paper I want to talk about Alberto Casiraghy and the *Edizioni PulcinoElefante* ⁱⁱⁱ.

Alberto Casiraghy is a small man in his fifties who lives in a little house in Brianza, a region quite near to Milan.

He is the creator and the owner of the *Edizioni PulcinoElefante*, a small Publishing House that he founded in 1982 and that is located in his house where there is also the old hand printing machine.

It is very difficult to explain in a few words what you can much better understand when you see and touch, because Casiraghy's house is not only a place where you print a book, but is also a kind of cultural *milieu* where you meet many people, well known artists and writers as well as simple neighbours or school children.



To spend a day at Casiraghy's house is a real life experience that enriches anyone who goes there.

Everyday he prints one of his little books that are made of four pages of hand made very good quality paper, on one side of each there is a small poem or an aphorism and on the other an original artwork.

This means that the number of copies of each book is very limited, about 30 each because the artists can't do so many artworks.

A few sentences to try to summarize who is Alberto Casiraghy:

- A choice in the name of poetry
- Over 7000 books published
- Remembering Johann Gutenberg
- "He is the baker of the publishers, the only one who prints daily" said Vanni Scheiwiller one of the more important Italian publishers



Since I went the first time to Casiraghy's house to print a book, I was so enthusiastic that I wanted to organize something in Trieste, the town where I live, to show what all this was about.



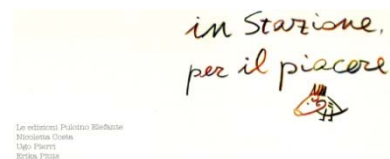
Finally with the cooperation of the Art Gallery Comunicarte we succeeded to organize an exhibition from the 29th May to the 21st June 2008 at the Spazio Comunicarte.

We decided to call it *Così per il piacere - Comme ça pour le plaisir - Just for the pleasure*, like Saint Exupéry's quotation because all the persons who were involved participated voluntarily just for the pleasure of doing something together.

Among Casiraghy's books there were also Ugo Pierri's paintings, a well known local painter. The exhibition had been such a success that two years later from the 4th to the 27 June 2010 we decided to organize a second one in a different location.

This time the exhibition took place in an old service station that has been renovated and now is a cultural centre called Stazione Rogers from the name of the architect that has designed it.

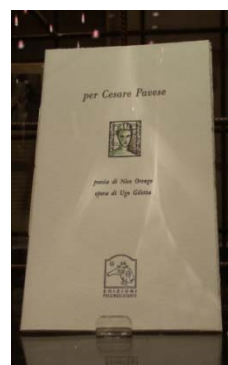
This is the reason why the name of the event was: *In stazione, per il piacere - At the station, for pleasure.*



In this occasion we decided to involve three artists, Nicoletta Costa, Ugo Pierri, Erika Pittis, asking them to draw some paintings inspired to the theme of play. Each of them drew also some smaller paintings for the books.

During the exhibition time we also organized several lectures on different subjects related to the theme and quite a number of workshops for children held by *Oplart* and the Clown Doctors.

Just before coming to the end, I want still to report of another experience I made, always thanks to the incredible world of relationships that revolves around Alberto Casiraghy.



Together with Ugo Pierri we have been invited to participate with a book to an exhibition in memory of Cesare Pavese, one of the most important Italian

contemporary writers. The exhibition took place in November 2009 in Santo Stefano Belbo (Cuneo), the small town in the Langhe, ^{iv} where Pavese was born.



Many important artist published Casiraghy's books in memory of Pavese and in a misty November afternoon we all were at the opening of the exhibition among the hills that Pavese described so well in his novels,

Conclusion

Following the style of the paper I want to finish it by using another quotation from *The Little Prince* that has to do with separation and mourning.

Adieu - Goodbye – Arrivederci – Näkemiin

"Adieu," dit le renard. "Voici mon secret. Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux." "L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux," ré péta le petit prince, afin de se souvenir.

"C'est le temps que tu a perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante"

"C'est le temps que j'ai perdu pour ma rose..." fit le petit prince, afin de se souvenir.

"Les hommes on oublié cette vérité," dit le renard. "Mais tu ne dois pas l'oublier. Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que tu as apprivoisé. Tu es responsable de ta rose..."

"Je suis responsable de ma rose..." répéta le petit prince, afin de se souvenir .

Antoine de Saint- Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*,

(1943)

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the time I have wasted for my rose--" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember."Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."

"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

Antoine de Saint- Exupéry, *The Little Prince*,

(1995)



Acknowledgements

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i In Hebrew the word *melitzah* means joke or witticism.

ii See Hannah Arendt essay *Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940*, in H. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.

iii *PulcinoElefante* is a word that that has been invented by Alberto Casiraghy. It means ChickElefant to suggest something that is small but also very big like his publishing house.

iv Langhe, that in the local dialect means hills, is a region of Piemonte well known for her hilly countryside, food and wine.