

Between the Divine Spark and One's Own Death

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In spite of contemporary literary theories, which have taken off writer's laurels of the authorship as an unrepeated original synthesis of form and content and have implanted doubt about creativeness as an effect of author's will, skills and intention, one of the key features of the traditional authorship concept is kept in the creative process – narcissism as a prolongation of the infantile period and with it connected feeling of creation ability within the field of unlimited possibilities. The paradox of the literary – and perhaps of any artistic creativeness – is in this, that a writer feels the most on himself and for himself in those creative periods, when it seems to him that, pervaded by unlimited, ocean feeling, he is surpassed by his own creativeness, that thus he alone is not that one, who controls the process, but he is »merely« means of a creative process.

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In spite of contemporary literary theories which have robbed the writer of the laurel of authorship as an unrepeatably original synthesis of form and content and injected doubt into creativity as an effect of the author's will and knowledge, one of the key features of the traditional concept of authorship has been retained in the creative process: narcissism as an infantile extension and the sense of the capability of creation in the field of unlimited capabilities that is linked with that. And if children are granted the animistic belief that they, through their wishes and thoughts, can make the sun rise and the moon wane, and if in adulthood the same conviction is quickly diagnosed as psychosis, in literature the creating of worlds through thought alone or – expressed in biblical terms – through the word, is not only socially acceptable but even respected, even if in some spaces, as in the Slovenian one, too, (only) symbolically, but also not financially, which is actually the other, dark side of the symbolic status of Slovenian language and literature.

Narcissism is built into the author's wish to unveil his own creative work and, with that, himself to the public, from whom he expects wishes and demands praise and reward and is often, in the event of contrary reac-

tions, childishly offended and insulted. But also authors who do not unveil their work to the public and “write only for themselves” – although, with that, they are also writing for the Other – in their intimate aestheticization of existence, if we take recourse to Freud, retain narcissism as an extension of childish play, which offers the creator a very particular sort of pleasure.

Today the author has not only not passed away, but seems very much alive and fleshy, as he is expected to publicly act as a promoter of his literature through his image and biography. Yet in the author’s fleshy existence there lies in the marketing system the fact that the author, not least for reasons of economic survival, is subjugated to the demands of market mechanisms and to the pressures of literary production, and the consequence of this can be a loosening of criteria and through this also a sliding of art into cultural production. Art which points to the real and through it to the truth, by which the real and truth and visible, if we refer to Gérard Wajcman, demands its own rhythm – a rhythm which is difficult to control and which can hardly ever be quickened – while cultural production comes into being without any greater difficulties during the agreed-upon terms for delivery. In contrast to cultural production, art should provide the creator and the recipient with much more than just a polished, relaxing pleasure, as it should, in both author and reader, or listener, alike, put asunder niches, boring holes out of which that truth seeps which culture blithely strives to keep concealed.

Whenever writers explain their own creative process, such experiments can sound interesting, but at the same time, this process proves to be an experience to which no other individual has access. And this other one is not merely a reader, but, concerning his explanation, the other is the author himself. Freud, who was enchanted by literature, wrote in his *Der Dichter und das Phantasieren* (1908): “Wenn wir wenigstens bei uns oder bei unsersgleichen eine dem Dichten irgendwie verwandte Tätigkeit auffinden könnten! Die Untersuchung derselben liesse uns hoffen, eine erste Aufklärung über das Schaffen des Dichters zu gewinnen.” But also when I try to explain my *ars poetica*, my own method of writing, by myself, I already during the uttering ask myself whether it is only a matter of my narrative, of a reconstruction of the creative process. For though there does not exist an external position from which the author could neutrally observe himself as he creates, writing is an activity in which subject and object are profoundly mixed. And if it is a matter of art and not culture, then in the creative process, if we refer to Lacan, the subject is actually re-established, and this is in points of non-recognition, where the author meets in himself that other, his own stranger, who is not integrated into

his own author's image, which is really nothing more than a merely imaginary construct.

During the creative process, the perception of time and space is transformed, and in addition to this it is difficult to limit the creative process, as it occurs not only in a circumscribed situation, seated at the computer or over a sheet of paper, but also in "un-consecrated" everyday moments, when suddenly an idea furtively arises, a knot is untied or a sentence happens to un-husk itself. And because creativity gives rise in the author to extraordinary enjoyment, to which the creator's essence and identity are attached, and of which the author is most keenly aware during those silent periods of creative blocks, creative drought can cause both the loss of identity and a sense of having slid into non-being.

The paradox of both literary creativeness and other forms of creativeness lies in the fact that although the idea of freedom is linked to creativeness, to the free activity in the realm of limitless possibilities, the author feels most himself and for himself in those creative processes in which he, pervaded by the ocean of enjoyment, if we employ Freud's term, experiences it is not he who control creativeness but, on the contrary, he is controlled by creativeness. But such periods can quickly be converted into their opposite, when the eruptive source suddenly dries up, sometimes for a lengthy period of time, but sometimes it is drained forever. And while the enigmatic mechanisms of the creative process open the niches through which the "Divine spark" occasionally flashes, which the author experiences as the surplus of his own existence and a firm point of his existence, during the longer periods of creative drought, when the creative enjoyment evaporates, along with the certainty of existence that is linked with it, he can experience himself as a dead author, and his life as a parasitical one that feeds on the past chapters of a somewhat successful biography.

But is there a means of triggering creativeness? Positive psychology believes in this and offers a formula which attributes especially positive thinking to yoga, meditation and similar relaxation techniques. But if such a therapy is perhaps effective in management and in similar activities, in which efficiency counts, efficiency as a regeneration of culture, the artistic process as a formula for achieving homeostasis, is usually immune. This is because art usually happens in the extremes, there where there is something that is too much, which is right because something else is lacking, or at that times when there is an excessiveness of distress, as André Breton writes in *Arcane 17*, which causes a change of the sign, when art as an act transforms a distress, pain or death into gold, value, life. So Dostoevsky, according to the words of his wife, as Freud states, wrote in conditions

that were by no means harmonic – if Dostoevsky, spanned between sky and hell had ever experienced such conditions at all – but after extremely exciting and agitating gambling which had ended in bankruptcy and his self-image, his phantasmal firm core had evaporated between guilty feelings and the loss of dignity.

It is possible to compare creative mechanism with the extensions and contractions, with deep breathing and with asthmatic restricted breathing, with peaks, when the author's ego passes over from nil to the megalomaniac extensions, all the way to the subterranean, when the author's ego evaporates and disappears. In creativeness the conscious and the unconscious are united, the author with his imaginary self is united with the author as the subject of the unconscious. In creativeness the author's self-glorification, which is fastened to the firm core of self-certainty, and the essence of the dispersion through with the author encounters otherness in himself, when he stumbles over the third part of the statement *cogito ergo sum*, for this *cogito* is not conscious, it is not the firm substantial formation, but his "private" foreigner, who at skilled artistic articulation can twinkle as a divine spark, transcendence, or, depending on the creator's concept of the world, as the own squeezed scum, as the slippery quantum fraction, which is disappearing constantly, and returning and appearing again and again.

The statement that all the stories have already been told and written has been chewed over and is superficial, for something like "all stories" does not even exist, and there exist only the basic human contents like sense and non-sense of life, essence and non-essence, the mysteries of human relations and complications, the relation between man and the world and whatever the world should already mean. And stories, not only narrative tales, but also other forms of putting-into-words of the distance between existence and non-existence, are not merely the explanation of reality but at the same time its construction. Is, consequently, the writing of autobiographies as a putting-into-words of what has happened to us at all possible, and is there not a way in which we can more radically intervene in "our life story"? Although the word itself, language, is a mediator of its own supposed immediate experience, autobiography is, similarly to the stream of thoughts of our memories, always a constructed narrative. And although within ourselves there perhaps even exists a sort of hard drive, on which the most minute details of our life are inscribed, the searching for and opening of those documents are controlled by our own censor and are at the same time the fitter of our memories. I therefore believe that it is possible through fiction as an intentionally-constructed narrative which is not obliged to repeat that which we know – because that which we know is merely a construction that is acceptable to ourselves – more thoroughly

to poke out also the unpleasant and, especially, the parts of truth that are foreign to us and to reproduce them through words.

But irrespective of the various creative methods and genres, there always exists a trace of the author in the writing – and this more than in the choice of innumerable reworking of themes and contents, in the vary manner of their handling, in the structure of writing and in the author's perspective, for already a slight shift in perspective can illuminate the object so that it is seen completely differently than we are used to seeing and knowing it. These conscious-unconscious choices, whether the author be aware of them or not, encompass his spiritual, material, emotional and other experiences. And it is precisely on this sharpness and on these edges that there remains the trace of authorship and of the author, and this trace is not only stronger but also truer than the accompanying, agreeable constructed public image and biography of the author.

Translated by Jason Blake