

The House of the Soul

Victoria Caceres

We create for many reasons. Einstein said, “One of the strongest motives that lead men to arts and sciences is to escape from everyday life with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness.” Our capacity to understand is much bigger than what we need on a daily basis. After we have had our breakfast, done our work, watched TV, there is this layer of boredom that can drive us to insanity. Creation provides, then, the ideal shelter, the temple, the necessary means for our mental trips. We are not only animals that know, but animals who ask, we have this thirst for explanation, for causality and for finality we cannot ignore. The questions, the doubts start in the bottom of our mind, they grow slowly until they turn into wild flowers, tropical plants and we cannot ignore them anymore.

We create because, as Wittgenstein said, “the facts of the world are not, will never be the end of the matter.” We are conquerors, like the ones who, in the past, set sail in fragile ships over unknown oceans, we have the same urge that plunged them into the most dangerous situations. They could not stay put, settle for what they knew, be content with what they did every day, day after day, month after month, year after year. Neither can we. We need to discover new lands in our thoughts, in our minds, in our souls. To make maps of ourselves, to explore new possibilities, new roads, new cities to invent new habits, to test our capacity for tasting, smelling, experiencing phenomena.

We create because we know there is otherness out of reach. We know for a fact there is something outside us that is hard to grasp. We are condemned to the prison of our physical bodies, to the limit of our skins. This perception, this boundary makes us divide the world in two, what is inside our skin, and what is outside. But how can we be sure of what is really outside, what the others see, hear, receive? We are the animal that asks and asks and we do it to check that we are for real, that there is someone else out there in the same situation, with the same fears and illusions. We need to confirm that we don't exist only in our heads, we aim our works of art at others' souls and wait for a response, a message in a bottle, we sit on the coast of our little islands and wait for a reply to confirm that we exist.

We create because we are horrified of the void, we suffer from *horror vacui*, terror of the emptiness of the universe, the endless mass of what we can never understand, the unsurmountable abyss between the rest and us. We build bridges, we knock on doors, we invent meaning where there is nonsense, we try and order chaos. Creation, like entropy, happens in the limits, in the border of chaos, and it is what holds us together, what glues us to the world and to the other isolated specks of beings.

We create even though by doing so we get just a momentary satisfaction, we apply violence by naming, by ordering, by choosing, we fossilize meaning by ordering things in time and space. “Designation isolates, ruptures a primordial unity and cohesion” says George Steiner. But we can't help it, if we don't designate, the monster of the undivided will devour us. The irony is we can never find the right distance. If we don't create, the world and its grinding machine of relentless movement towards the future will bore us, starve our hungry souls to death. But if we do, we immediately feel that we have committed a crime, we have killed by action all the latent possibilities of the unborn.

We create to let out some, at least, of the inner speech in our heads that can go roaming until insanity. Each of us has a unique perspective, a sole perception that cannot physically be shared by anyone else, a phenomenological angle that makes us the only capable of elaborating on that portion of reality we see, the one we are privileged to determine.

We create to fight the sensation of nothingness. We can always not create, creating is an act of freedom, we don't need to create to survive in everyday life. And yet, there is more to our hunger than food. Creation is the only way to make sense of the historic timeline of the world, it helps us to order the past and the present, making us feel that we belong to a race, a culture, a family. Creation is a way of balancing our need of excess and our fear of emptiness. We need to make a house for our souls and thoughts, a house of meaning, a dictionary and a grammar of the world outside and inside us to find a common currency with the others.

We create because we aim at perfection. Philosophers used to think that the proof of the existence of God is our understanding of the concept of perfection. We are also jealous and greedy and we want to emulate that perfection. We realize of the beauty and wisdom of our existing in this world and we desperately want to be this God, this idea of God that we once invented to feel secure, protected. We struggle to add something to the world. We create to fight darkness, invisibility, to materialize the voice in our heads and become real. We know that what we invent is more real than what exists. 221b Baker Street is the "most real" address in London...

We create to heal the wounds of real life, the misunderstandings, the pain, the loneliness, the broken hearts.

We create to feel just for a moment that we can invent our own notion of time and space, our own land. We send our works of art like time capsules into the world to avoid being forgotten, to survive our biological life.

We create to try and make sense of what does not and cannot make any sense. We create to find a shelter, a religion, to believe for a minute that there is "truth," a place where we can rest our heads for a moment, stop thinking, relax our feverish brains that insist on action.

We create to see things in a new light, from a new angle, we cannot really invent anything new, so we have to settle for reordering the same mosaics again and again in hopeless search of new horizons.

We create to answer all the questions that neither science nor religion can answer.

But, most of all, we create to delay death. We are sharply aware of the shadow of death, each day closer, and we ransack our brains trying to find the way to stop it, to postpone it, to make deals with it. When we create we feel immortal, we are at peace with ourselves and with others, with the cosmos and the earth and the universe. It is a short-lived, ephemeral feeling of being bigger than life, untouched by time, divine as gods, an all-powerful species who have vanquished the corruption of matter. Soon we realize it's just an illusion, but we are also obstinate, and we go back, like drug addicts, to the same stimulus, the same rush, the same dream that calms our excruciating pain.