

## **The Act of Creation**

Mahir Oztas

As J. P. Sartre said in his book "What is Literature," man decides when he is young what kind of art he will choose from the three main subjects: literature, painting and music. These were called the three main art forms even in the ancient world. I was a bored child when I was in boarding school. I think I was quite talented in music and painting in a way, but I chose literature in the end, probably for more practical reasons. "Boredom" is really an important concept in art, a kind of "psychoneurosis" or you can use the more general term "anxiety." I mention this because to fully understand a writer's style one needs to know something of his or her compositional process. "Since boredom advances and boredom is the root of all evil, no wonder, then, that the world goes backwards, that evil spreads. This can be traced back to the very beginning of the world. The gods were bored: therefore they created human beings," says Soren Kierkegaard. I don't think that things have changed so very much since Kierkegaard's time; my attempts to avoid boredom brought me to write texts. But I also know that to write a book also means being part of the entertainment industry and I totally agree with that, because nobody wants to read a boring book. So as Saul Steinberg wrote, "The life of the creative man is led, directed and controlled by boredom. Avoiding boredom is one of our most important purposes."

I have also found the Creative Impulse in dreams, I believe there is an archetypal creative impulse in every dream, but unfortunately this creative energy isn't always clearly visible to the dreamer. It requires an effort of imagination to bring the dream's images into the light of consciousness. We often find dreams provide solutions to problems even the conscious mind can say nothing about. Anti-creative mental "blocks" are also more loose in dreams where we have the ability to escape from them. In this way our dreams work to awaken our problem solving habits. Sometimes a dream can be a nightmare and the nightmare by nature is distressing. One technique for reducing the distress of the nightmare is to write it down. We all know that the world of dreams is dark, yet the deep unconscious contains things the waking unconscious desires. So we can think of our nightmares as a way to understand some aspects of the self, aspects which are often nasty, dangerous and frightening. If we use dreams as writing material, we easily understand that the creative impulse is part of every dream, even if it is a nightmare.

Next I must mention my travels, because every travel brought me a new story. For example "The Towers of Silence" from my story collection "Fear Game" tells a story about India. "An Obsession in the Course of Grape Picking" is about my experiences in Southern France, when I was a student and I worked in a vineyard. "Katmandu, The End of the Road" relates to my experience in Nepal and "Paradise of the Forgiven" was inspired by my travel to Algeria, where one morning I missed my bus from Annaba to Tunisia.

Like my travels, a lot of things about my profession in architecture have inspired me. My story "Committee for Moon Watching" is set at a construction site and one of the characters is a chief architect. He discovers that the houses at the site were planned and built such that one can easily pass from house to house over the flat roofs. As a consequence, the flat roofing system of the houses could lead to a disaster and corruption of social norms and beliefs.

Multi-disciplinary readings also help me write stories. For example, "La Machine Infernale" is a story told by an historian which depicts the struggle of another historian through memories and documents.

My interests in politics inspired my story "Game of Fear." Once upon a time when there was organized horror in the streets, people were playing fear games in their houses. At the time there was martial law and a night curfew that prevented anyone from going out at nights. In the fear games, the victim would never be selected beforehand. The victim would appear and be nominated during the course of the fear game. In order to eliminate the risk of oppression within the game, there were some rules set up as follows:

a. Participation in a fear game was voluntary, b. A fear game was not a permanent game, c. A fear game had to be functional, d. A fear game to be played in small groups.

In the process of a fear game, there would be competition between the players of the fear game over power and ruling. In the end one of the players would be murdered but the whole act would seem as if it were an accident. The rules of the game were violated and the struggle over power and ruling began.

Sometimes theoretical readings help me write my stories and novels. For me, ontology and language are dual aspects of the creative process and while the logocentric mind follows a linear causeway, the creative mind flows circuitously and spontaneously through images. In my last novel, Nourishing a Desire, my main character is an artist who tries to solve a murder. Reminiscent of Thomas Bernhard's style, the narrative takes numerous turns and lights upon cities like Glasgow, San Francisco, and New Orleans; upon Balthus and the art circles in Istanbul; upon writers and pseudo-writers, loves and fake loves, malevolence and compassion, losers and survivors. The narrator of the novel remembers his past for three days and his reminiscence takes him back to Istanbul, to his days at the academy of fine arts, to his friends and the conversations he had with them, to the women and the places he loved, and to his friend who was murdered. All these intertwine to lead him to a deeper understanding of himself.

The creative process, as described by Lawrence and Coleridge, brings being and language closer together. As Arthur Koestler maintains in *The Act of Creation*, "the creative act...always operates on more than one plane." Discovery often requires a sudden alogical shift from one matrix to another, affording a wholly new angle of vision. I try to bridge the gap between thinking and experience, using my inspirations from history, boredom, architecture, travels, and multi-disciplinary reading in order to be storyteller, poet, and provocateur in my fiction.