

THE PERSISTING SADNESS, AN INCLINATION TO BECOME EMOTIONAL: THE CASE OF INSPECTOR RICCIARDI GIFTED WITH THE CAPACITY TO FEEL PAIN

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SUMMARY

Through the analysis of "Luigi Alfredo Ricciardi" the main character of detective series by Maurizio De Giovanni, the structuring of a normal melancholic constitution, which we term the depression-prone style of personality, is reconstructed.

Key words: detective series – depression

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"The laceration caused by Rosa's death in his life, Ricciardi thought, would never be healed. It would have left an open scar, ready to bleed... A dull and pulsating pain, ready to be renewed again and again. He had finally understood, having made friends with suffering since he was a child, how terrible it was to endure a loss like that."

(extracted from "Anime di vetro",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

Luigi Alfredo Ricciardi, son of the Baron Ricciardi di Malomonte and Lady Marta, was born in a small village in Cilento. The year of birth is 1900. *"And my childhood ...I was the son of the baron, I didn't have many friends. I used to spend my time playing alone, daydreaming about scenarios taken from fairy tales told by Rosa and Mario, the farmer". " And my mother used to read pages of books in the evening.... We did not talk much and we looked at each other a lot But she died ... a long time ago. She was insane, perhaps ". " I went to a boarding school, managed by priests. Mass, Vespers, spiritual exercises. So many words."*

(extracted from "Il senso del dolore",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

"...Enigmatic figure, the inspector Luigi Alfredo Ricciardi, the baron of Malomonte. ... the late father ... died in the prime of life ... the mother, a delicate girl with green eyes ... retired to the meanders of the lower Cilento before dying from a serious illness of nerves. ... And Luigi, a taciturn ... in boarding school, managed by the Jesuits, always setting aside, a little frightening, was therefore ignored by everyone."

(extracted from "Serenata senza nome",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

"But the social distance - in the village of the lower Cilento - was not a good premise for friendship; therefore Luigi Alfredo preferred to spend his time with Rosa, the nanny. ... The child ... surrounded by imaginary friends and enemies, fought loneliness with fantasy ... "

(extracted from "Il posto di ognuno",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

Rosa remembered that when the young gentleman was a child, there was a group of bad guys in the village who bullied him ... laughing as he passed ... Luigi Alfredo suffered a lot, even if he never spoke about it, and she realized this from the sad look he had every time he went back home after having meeting with them. Rosa, trying to settle the situation, went to talk to the head of the boys settling the situation with a couple of slaps. Since then it had not happened that the young gentleman was mocked, but they called for him less and less: perhaps the cure had been worse than the disease."

(extracted from "Il posto di ognuno",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

The secret feature of inspector Ricciardi, which he calls "the Done", is the ability to perceive the last words and all the pain of the victims of violent death. *"I see the pain. I see the regret, the suffering. I hear the echo of the love that disappears, the claws that break in the anxiety of holding back the last part of the life that is going away. I hear the scream that accompanies the fall into the abyss."*

(extracted from "Il senso del dolore",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

"Your legacy, mother. Your terrible gift. The condemnation you inflicted on me, which I carry on me like a cross. ... And he felt all together the scars on his heart and soul, as if they were fresh wounds: they bleed and they would still bleed."

(extracted from "Serenata senza nome",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

We have chosen the main character of Maurizio De Giovanni's detective series as a significant and peculiar figure with a particular way of feeling due to a chronic eliciting and a constant activation of those basic emotions which are relevant to both depression and bereavement: sadness and anger. A way of feeling, due to the sedimentation of this tonality over time as a character trait, may predispose to develop a temperate melancholic constitution or (according to the language of post-rationalist constructivism) to a depressive-prone style of personality (tDD). From the analysis of the Ricciardi character there are no traits and signs that can make us

think of a depressive personality disorder (DPD) or a chronic depression on an affective basis. The key point that allows us to discriminate a tDD from a DPD is the individual's capacity to disengage from the situation that generates sadness by grasping this affective states not as destructive emotions, but as sources of meanings, so that the understanding of himself generates new possibilities of engagement with himself, with others and with the world. The person with this type of personality perceives himself through emotional states such as sadness and anger that become ontological in the constitution of his being-in-the-world, but also possesses the capacity, in order to change the negative emotional states through which he perceives his situatedness, to generate new possibilities of meanings. The crucial discriminant is this: the ability not to fall prey to sadness and anger. And absolutely one of the most important variables that mostly determines the becoming a prey and a slave to one's restlessness, subtracting from oneself the freedom to be, is the intensity of the experience of rejection in the course of development. Extraordinary contributions to explaining the genesis of depressive-prone style of personality have been made by psychoanalysis and the attachment theory by bringing to light that a chronic condition of lack of care – ranging from indifference to detachment, disdain, hostility and abuse – loss, separation, contempt may affect the development of one's personality, to the point of making it more vulnerable to depression. The above mentioned experiences seem to indicate that a dysfunctional parental style – in Ricciardi's case, the dynamic and affective father died when Luigi was 3 while his mother is described as beautiful and sad - elicits emotional reactions that, sedimented over time, carry within them the power to "mean" silently, thus inclining the child's feelings towards a reference context focused more or less on states of sadness, anger and anguish. However, only in the case of enduring situations! In fact, an early loss is not enough to prepare for melancholy.

As we can see during the reconstruction of the childhood and youthful experiences of the young Ricciardi, the themes of loneliness, sadness and anguish, emotional and physical distance from the parental figure recur: "And my childhood ... I was the baron's son, I did not have many friends. I spent my time playing alone". The father, who is described as a lively man, died when his son was 3 years old, leaving him alone with a beautiful and sad mother, with big desperate green eyes, who used to read pages and pages of books, but we can infer, very reserved, sad and with poor physical contact with the child. "But she died ... a long time ago. She was insane, perhaps". "I was in a boarding school, managed by priests. Mass, Vespers, spiritual exercises. So many words". "...And Luigi, a taciturn ... in boarding school, managed by the Jesuits, always setting aside, a little frightening, was therefore ignored by everyone", and further the social distance in the village of the lower Cilento that was not a good premise for friendship.

A recurrent triggering of the above-mentioned life themes, sedimented over time, inclined the young Luigi toward a contest of reference that is mainly focused on states of sadness and anger and anxiety, whose constant activation anchored him to a body-centred reference system that allowed him to focus on inward signals, on internal polarization, on visceral states. Hence, the structuring of the personality will be progressively declined according to narrative themes necessarily coherent with the constant activation of these emotions. Thus the ways of being-in the multiplicity of experiences will be mostly directed by a visceralness of sadness and anger that, in being then reconfigured according to themes of loneliness, impotence and inadequacy, will progressively develop a personal identity as the tDD (Arciero 2009). "He had always been a gloomy and silent man, allowing himself at most some sharp, sudden irony."

(extracted from "Anime di vetro",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

Ricciardi is "ontological solitude" and "ontological unacceptability". Because of his enduring disposition towards sadness he is kept at a distance by colleagues and subordinates, except Maione and Modo. It is this "excess of inwardness" that gives that feeling of election and "that makes solitude and uniqueness coincide: being unique makes one feel one is alone. Also deriving from this excess of inwardness is a difficulty in communicating: almost a feeling of shame to present one's being to others, which makes one feel alien, like an exile in the world" (G. Arciero, 2009). Indeed De Giovanni tells us that Ricciardi "had no friends, wasn't seeing anyone". "The mode of feeling situated corresponds to an attitude of mistrust toward the world and particularly toward others, perceived as possible sources of intolerable emotions" (Arciero 2009).

His emotional life is empty, though he loves Enrica at a distance, a shy neighbor a few years younger than him, with whom he only exchanges glances through the window, not knowing that in turn he is observed by the girl.

Rosa, his nanny/housekeeper says: "You have to know that in character he is a little closed, how you say ... reserved, shy. In short, he is not the type that comes forward easily. In my opinion, he's afraid of being rejected" (extracted from "Il giorno dei morti",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

And Luigi: "This is me, Enrica. A man fated to walk in pain, to be deafened, softened, suffocated. What can someone like that give you? What kind of life? What kind of love?" (extracted from "Il giorno dei morti", by Maurizio De Giovanni); "loving someone means to want his or her own good ... when you are sure you are evil, you must move away" (extracted from "Anime di vetro", by Maurizio De Giovanni). "If only you knew what hell I had in my heart, and how much I would like to stand by you like any other man" (extracted from "In fondo al tuo cuore", by Maurizio De Giovanni). "That man, you know, feels a very strong feeling. But he is terrified of it, because he sees the effects of that feeling

on everyday life. And he thinks that keeping it then out of his life, and keeping him out of the lives of people who ... of the people who are dear to him, is the best way to do them good. That's all. And for this reason, perhaps, he keeps away, in the terrible hope of being forgotten; and in the knowledge that being forgotten would kill him "

(extracted from "In fondo al tuo cuore",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

As we can see, the initial attitude towards the affective relationship is to feel fear / avoidance in order to reduce the risk connected to the uncontrol of rejection or loss, but as the relationship stabilizes and the link can no longer be ignored, he will change strategies to reduce the danger related to involvement. In the final novel of the detective series, the inspector will recognize Enrica as reliable after confiding her his deep despair and the pain of his soul, and then she will welcome him by promising to him eternal love.

Finally, let us ask what has allowed inspector Ricciardi not to develop a depressive personality disorder? Rosa says: "My young gentleman took all the love I had in my heart" ... " I held my young gentleman much more than the baroness herself."

(extracted from " In fondo al tuo cuore",
by Maurizio De Giovanni)

Acknowledgements: None.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

Contribution of individual authors:

Marcello Nardini reviewed it and wrote the final version of the paper;

Immacolata d'Errico wrote the first draft of the paper;

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