

***Vulnerare*, GIULIO CASINI**

Time and space are the realms where life unfolds; simultaneously, they represent possibility and limit. Since always, we have sought – or imagined – a way to avoid being confined to this assigned space, to this limited time; but then, we also desire a cage to shelter us from the world's evils, a protection against the risk of no longer existing.

This is why we build houses, enclosures, cages, we surround ourselves with bars; intended to prevent evil from entering, they make it harder for us to venture out into a world that can also be hospitable, full of beauty and possibilities.

Often these enclosures, these limits, are square in shape; it seems simpler, more effective, we somehow are reassured by the square. Perhaps this is why works of art have often adopted this shape, fencing off and defining a space within which to express the condition of those who, like us – already slaves to time – seek to use space to their advantage.

This is what Sergio Mario Illuminato accomplishes by using space and not allowing himself to be used by it, for once; and in that conquered space, he enacts an alchemical transformation which uses the material world – stones, colors, plants, objects, and above all, fire – to reach through his "Opera al Rosso" the ideal goal of alchemy, the ultimate aim of those who sought to transcend the limits of the world and life, till that Philosopher's Stone that would guarantee eternity, immortality.

That same immortality evoked by the myths of heroes who achieve it by falling asleep in the God's cave, or the erasure of time that myth relates to sleeping and – especially – dreaming on the graves of their ancestors, allowing for communication with them. And this is even more during the summer solstice, when the sun no longer casts shadows, standing vertical over the world; time is testified and made visible by shadows, thus – with the stasis of time – the distance between their having been present in the past and our being present today is annulled.

This also explains the fascination that ruins exert on us (many of Sergio Mario Illuminato's works are present-day ruins, desired current ruins), the attraction we feel towards what remains today of a distant yesterday; the current presence of what has not been for a long time, the emotion we feel in being able to touch with our hands something that has seen a time distant from today but still exists, along with us.

The present of the past that comes to touch the present of the present, thus deleting the time that had interposed between the two, and giving reality to what is a fundamental desire of the human being.

Sergio Mario Illuminato, in enclosing the world in a frame, in showing rather than hiding the wound of living, seeks fundamental harmony with reality, avoiding the shortcuts of an unrealistically illusory aesthetic perfection that would have us believe in a possible eternity through sameness, immobility, the absence of any change.

VULNERARE, on the other hand, believes that the solution lies in the question, in embracing precisely the reality that limits and imprisons us; that no one can escape without first entering it, and that one can only truly live by carrying with oneself – with all its weight – the non-beautiful, the painful, along with the enchantment, the wonderful enchantment of imperfection and failure.

It is a game we cannot win, ours, and as such, it is impossible to lose. Because one can only be defeated in a competition that admits victory, and our life does not fall into this category. Time flows inexorably, space is limited, and nothing can change these conditions. But what matters, then, is what we manage to bring to life during the time and in the space that are assigned to us; and Art is exactly our way of living this time and space.

All this becomes visible in VULNERARE, conceived by Sergio Mario Illuminato for giving space and reality to concepts that would have been difficult to express otherwise. The caged birds that violently flap their wings inside the prison whose doors we have just seen open (open for us?), are us, are our souls desperately seeking a way out; but at the same time, they have found refuge there, in a place where – like many before them – they have been forced, blocked, and strangled by time no less than by the walls.

We are innocent condemned to a prison we did not choose, but within which we can find companions capable of giving meaning to our time. And then in prison, we can write, carve (which is the original sense of the word "write") things on the walls that will certainly live beyond the time given to us; ruins of the soul, visible remnants of constrained spirits, still speaking to us of their disappeared authors.

The prison is the realm of time.

Continuing in the film, we see the writing again, this time in old, abandoned, now useless folders of past trials, of sentences concluded with the end of the times in which they were issued; but these are not pages, these are lives of men who were confined by those sentences for years, sometimes forever, in an immovable stone frame built around them, around their souls.

We then see Sergio Mario Illuminato's device 'Prohibition of Fission', cracked, ruined, wounded, a fascinating ruin in its being still and always there to testify to the uncertainty of the times, the incredible inevitable imperfection of life. But immediately the image of a human being seeking a possible life, drawing with arms and legs a liveable space, trying to give meaning to a place that has none; drawing a space that was not there before and creating one for life, precisely in a place that seems to deny it. Who knows if this is not what we all do a little, moving within our non-apparent prison in search of something that makes us feel truly alive.

And then another device, 'Collision': a ploughed, incised ground whose infinite fractures also suggest the idea of something fertile, potentially life-creating; just like the furrows ploughed in a field.

And then, following, thousands of other sheets that are people, sheets as ruins left to testify to the present absence of those who lived, confined in the present of a past time.

Still more writings appear, scratched names, people - names are people - on the walls, and in Sergio Mario Illuminato's works.

One of these is plaster and colours spread on a cage that is both bars of closure and necessary support, a sustenance. And then burnt paper, destroyed by fire, transformed by fire, as Phoenix seeking a resurrection from its ashes, as if it were necessary - to truly live - to destroy the apparent reality with fire. As if one necessarily had to pass through that red, that destructive heat that alchemists used to achieve the ultimate transformation, the Truth.

Another square: 'The Four Seasons of the Present'; yet another, which this time multiplies into four square fields and at the same time is a window. Because a square can be both a limit and an opening. And a cross; the cross in front of which (or perhaps in which) bodies dance, becoming crosses themselves, opening their arms.

Bodies who jump, who try to find a possible space, a possible life, and seek it together; they are two, they help, support, embrace, look at, love each other, and in their togetherness, the pain melts and falls down.

Dance as a possible exit, salvation to be reached together, to be reached with another, overcoming the limits of selfishness, of isolation, towards the desire for a union in love that can save us, that must save us. They dance in front of a square, in a closed room, trying to give shape and meaning to life, to spaces; and the cross returns, the motif of the four returns, our struggle. And who knows if that dancing couple, that "One plus One" might not be able to give life to something new, unprecedented, a "Three" that wasn't there before and which we feel so much the lack and need for in our journey as prisoners; we need this "Three" that can only be born from truly seeking and evoking it together, never alone.

Creating this "Three" may finally and truly allow us to escape the cage of time and space. A "Three" that is our way of living, talking, singing, dancing, playing, but together; that is our way of running, loving, smiling, looking at each other, embracing even with a cross behind us, and it is our possible salvation. A salvation that is truly such because it does not escape time or space but interprets and uses them; and this is what happens in VULNERARE by Sergio Mario Illuminato.

The final image of the film is the square (the frame) of the prison yard, space and limit for the person who inhabits it, like the many who - in the present of a distant past - inhabited it in the only hour when they could still try to give their existence the space of the sky. That infinite space above that is the only - but fundamental - difference between a courtyard and a room. That sky capable of making us feel (or delude ourselves - but does it really matter?) that we will have other spaces, other times, that not everything is destined to disappear.

A sky before our eyes, to transfer to the heart; to keep for when life seems like a prison with no exit, a concluded time. And it is under this sky conquered by sight that our vulnerability, our wounds become a testimony of possible life, as the writing on the wall at the end of the film says: "Vulnerable therefore alive, art is loving reality."

Perhaps truly loving reality is an art; and Art is our only way, our only possibility to truly face reality, and ourselves.

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