

UNPUBLISHED TEXTS / INEDITI

SHORT STORIES

ALDO NOVE

Aldo Nove, the *nom de plum* of Antonello Satta Centanin, was born on Viggìu in the province of Varese in 1967. Musician, poet and writer, his first collection of short stories *Woobinda e altre storie senza lieto fine* (Woobinda and Other Stories Without a Happy Ending) was published in 1996 and two years later it was included in an extended version under the title *Superwoobinda*. Nove, a child of our time, deals with themes related to consumerism and media-engendered neurosis by using violent, hallucinated and ironic language and homologated registers, a trade-mark of much new writing described as pulp or *neo-noir* which has generated popular and critical interest in Italy. The shock effect of Nove's stories has earned him a place among a group of young writers dubbed as 'Giovani Cannibali' (Young Cannibals), a term derived from an anthology of short stories, *Gioventù Cannibale*, edited by Daniele Brolli in 1966. Nove's first novel, *Puerto Plata Market*, was published in 1997. Amongst his various publications are *Amore mio infinito* (2000), *La più grande Balena morta della Lombardia* (2004), *Mi chiamo Roberta, ho 40 anni, guadagno 250 euro al mese*" (2006) and *Si parla troppo di silenzio* (2009).

The following short stories are from *Superwoobinda* (Torino, Einaudi, 1998).

Translated by

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THE BATH FOAM

I have killed my parents because they were using an outrageous bath foam, Pure & Vegetal.

My mother said that it would keep my skin moist but I use Vidal and I want everyone at home to use Vidal.

Because I remember that since I was a kid I've liked the ad for Vidal bath foam a lot.

I would lie in bed and look at that horse running.

That horse was Freedom.

I wanted everyone to be free.

I wanted everyone to buy Vidal.

Then one day my father said that at the Esselunga¹ there was an offer of three for two and that we should take it. Never did I imagine that it would include the bath foam.

My family has never understood me.

From then on I've always bought my own Vidal bath foam, and I didn't give a damn if at home there were still three bottles of Pure & Vegetal with calendula that needed to be finished off.

Besides every time I went into the bathroom and I would see one of those sordid plastic bottles next to the bidet I would fly into a rage, and refuse to dine with them.

Not everything can be communicated.

See for yourself and watch your reaction when they tamper with your ideals. And all because of cheaper prices. From then on, I didn't utter a word.

¹ Esselunga = Italian chain of supermarkets.

I would eat in my bedroom, potato chips and Mulino biscuits, I didn't even want to see my friends: I made as if I wasn't at home when they phoned.

As each day went by I would notice how ugly my mother really was.

I had a mother who could never be in politics, with varicose veins and yellow stained fingers from smoking.

My mother disgusted me and I would ask myself how I could have loved her as a child.

My father, he too was growing older by the day.

The moment had come to kill them off.

One evening I came out of my room and said to them that I had decided to eliminate them.

They looked at me with their old people's eyes perhaps amazed that I had finally decided to speak to them, and they asked me why.

I said that they should at least change the bath foam.

They started to laugh.

I then went up to my room and took a can of peeled tomatoes that I had hidden under the bed to eat at night.

I returned to the kitchen and locked the door shut.

I yelled at my mother saying that she was a disgusting human being and that she should have had her uterus removed before she conceived me.

My father shot up from his chair and tried to give me a clout but I gave such a kick to his testicles that he fell to the floor breathless.

My mother rushed to his side, crying and screaming and uttering incoherent words which made her look more old and ridiculous. I sank the sharp lid of the can into her neck, litres of blood gushed out as she squealed like a pig.

Then I killed my father with a knife for frozen food.

It truly disgusted me the way they were dying vomiting blood.

There was blood all over the tiles and more was to come as the two changed colour.

I went upstairs again and took the two bottles (one had already been used) of their fucking bath foam.

I brought them to the kitchen and placed them on the table as I crushed my mother's skull with the mallet used for meat.

Her brain spilled out, very viscid, and there were tiny pieces of skin with hair that came off like Scotch tape.

My father's head seemed softer but maybe I had just given it the right blow.

I flushed their brain down the drain and neatly cleaned the inside of their skulls with a Scottex paper towel.

I poured into them Pure & Vegetal, once and for all they would know that t²

² The story ends in this manner.

FAMILY PLOT

My wife Vincenza 32 years old Pisces said to me come on let's do something with another couple let's try a new sexual experience with these people she spoke to me we don't always eat the same stuff why are you tired of me I said to her. She said to me come on Eugenio 50 years old Sagittarius that has nothing to do with it let's try to live a different sensation you with another woman and I with another man let's exchange partners she said to me.

Okay let's try let's do it first let's see what it's like I was bewildered how did you meet them I asked her I met the woman she suggested the exchange they are a beautiful couple let's try let's go she said to me.

Okay let's go I said to her. She took me to this couple's home Francesca a fine young cunt 20/22 years old her husband Marco a nice bloke 26/27 years old she my wife went to the bedroom with this guy Marco she was laughing I was bewildered it all seemed like a dream to me my wife had always been faithful so I believed she had gone to the other room with this bloke and I had stayed behind with this fine cunt what a fine cunt I thought.

Have you ever exchanged partners she asked me no I've never done it before I said to her. I looked at her thighs I looked at her mouth her breasts I looked at this fine cunt her miniskirt she said to me don't be shy no I'm not shy it's that it all seems like a dream to me I said to her.

But my wife that bitch with that bloke Marco was in the other room me on this side with that doll and a hard on she was lying on the sofa with her thighs her miniskirt and all the things for sexual excitement come near me she said to me I like you she said to me I also like you I said to her sweating.

But my wife that bitch with that bloke Marco was in the other room and I watched the doll next to me come closer and closer I'm sure your wife is enjoying it very much with my husband now let's also enjoy it she said to me yes let's also enjoy it that bitch of my wife I said to her.

My wife then came into the room with that bloke she came in laughing what did you do there in the other room I screamed at her don't shout she said to me.

Holy shit what did you do in the other room with that jerk tell me what did you do in the other room tell me what did you do with this vile being in the other room..

Relax said the cunt the bloke's wife no I can't relax goddamn I want to know now I'll burn the house I punched the bitch facing me don't fret no goddamn we are on *Family Plot* the slut told me the fuck I care you are on *Family Plot* calm down Eugenio that programme with Alberto Castagna with Raffaella Trotta the one who says we'll be back soon in an instant only shortly in an instant *Bellissima* if you are at least one metre seventy size 42 you can participate in *Bellissima* from the Bay of Gabicci Cotonella slip Ronco wine you tear it like that each time that you press the cheese and fruit pack Plasmon milk without colourants with cheese and fruit Pronto wood polish with soap and detergent cleans wooden surfaces deeply without rinsing fasten your belt young

man look where we are it seems like Egypt you are in Gardaland how beautiful are my shoes Sanagens they have arch support at the chemist in Vichy to fight against cellulite don't idle 144.11.429 that cunt from Sanremo not Koll the other the blonde who runs around in panties in and out of buildings volume effect without a bra support on primetime TV for Super Films Harrison Ford soon on Channel 5.

Welcome to Channel 5 welcome to *Family Plot* on Channel 5 that broadcast don't you understand said my wife to me we played a trick on you so that we could go to Castagna to have a good laugh on television come on don't act like that but at that moment I couldn't understand Castagna Channel 5 my wife was a bitch what did I care about Channel 5 and television what did I care holy shit I broke that bitch's head the one sitting near by what did I care about Channel 5 this story I was yelling some men arrived they came out of the wall what are you doing have you gone crazy they said to me.

YOGHURT

It's nice to buy books.

A home without books is a sad place.

I have 75 books.

They are all encyclopaedias, because other books are not as neat.

Many have covers with only one colour, others, like the history of Fascism or the encyclopaedia of the modern fisherman, are of different colours.

The bookseller keeps all the issues of the encyclopaedias in the colours I want. I collect them and I store them in the house.

I who have so many books, I'm Ugo. I'm forty years old. My zodiac sign is Pisces.

I have an encyclopaedia that is about the history of philosophy. If you want to read it, you must know that you can understand it only at the beginning, but not after. Towards the end it's quite complicated. At the beginning there are some people who explain that everything is made of something else. One of them says that everything is made of water, another that everything is made of air, and so forth.

For me, the world is made of yoghurt and you become aware of this only gradually, as you grow older.

As a child you don't realize it, you take objects as they come. You save money so that you can buy and use them. You play with them without thinking for what purpose they are made.

The shop downstairs, which stays open until three at night, sells flavoured ice-cream..

They taste for example of chocolate. Or vanilla. And of yoghurt. Yoghurt can be plain or apricot flavoured or with other flavours. Apricot tastes truly of apricot, since it's made from apricot, but, before that, it tastes of yoghurt because it's made from yoghurt, it's apricot flavoured yoghurt from which, later, they extract pure apricot and sell it, and the same goes for the other flavours and for everything else.

For example take the cakes made by Mulino Bianco. Go and check the ingredients, if you happen to have one in your own sitting room. It says that its softness comes from apricot flavoured yoghurt.

Before yoghurt the world was hard, full of dinosaurs and other creatures according to the encyclopaedia on prehistoric animals. Men did not eat yoghurt and were complete idiots.

They lived like beasts. Little by little they realized that it's no use arguing, because everything is made of yoghurt, that everything is the same and that it's useless to bother about anything. This is the history of philosophy explained in a nutshell.

I don't think that everyone (practically no-one) is aware of this. If you want to know about it you should buy books that help you to think, and not simply cheap pornographic magazines and love stories for women, because even if these are made from yoghurt like every living thing they are hard, they are prehistoric, they talk about something else and one does not realize how things actually are, so one takes to the streets to protest with the Communists, stops buying yoghurt, buys Galbani desserts instead, and eats them without thinking how it's made, and moves away from yoghurt, and the years go by and in the course of one's existence one gets nowhere, one goes through life like this, with no skill, no claim to his name until one dies and changes once again into yoghurt.

NEOCIBALGINA

When we meet, me and my friends, we talk about Neocibalgina³. At the beginning it was not at all very clear. The first to understand was Giuseppe. Fifteen. Libra. He phoned me one evening, about three months ago. He told me to switch on quickly the second channel, Raidue. I found the channel. I saw a youngster. And a girl. A motorbike. The countryside. In their eyes the joy of being young. Neocibalgina.

I remember the catchy tune, now no longer in use. It's impossible to describe the thrill I felt when I heard it. And it was painful, at table, to hear it suddenly with the flow of my mother's silly and unending chatter. My mother's chatter weighed heavily on me at that time, more than the slaps she used to give me as a child, and I wished with all my might that she would disappear, and that we would be alone. Me and the television.

I searched the whole of Rome for a disc with that tune. From shop to shop I rummaged among the compacts looking for the Neocibalgina disc. Nobody had it. Perhaps there is a central State which confiscates such beautiful discs. Perhaps it's someone high up, who is above us and doesn't want people to be happy.

At school Michela showed me the box. The rainbow had all the colours of our ideals. I started taking Neocibalgina every day.

³ Neocibalgina is a type of analgesic, a drug used to relieve pain and produced by the English biochemical pharmaceutical company Novartis formerly known as Ciba (hence the drug's brand name).

My headache disappeared in an instant. If I didn't have it I would still take Neocibalgina, and it was marvellous because my mouth would feel pasty, and I would have something to talk about with my friends.

At four, in Piazza delle Fontane, we would compare our experiences. Michela was the chief instigator amongst us. She would sit, she would take the box out from her pocket and she would tell us how many tablets of Cibalgina she had taken. We all paid great attention to her words. Even though we knew that at times she exaggerated, it was unlikely that someone would dare to interrupt her. Her voice was so beautiful.

I remember very vividly the first time I asked for Neocibalgina at a chemist shop. It was stronger than when I asked for Oransoda. I was ten years old then, at ten you don't drink Oransoda. At sixteen, on the other hand, not everyone knows what it means to buy Neocibalgina. The fact is that it was exciting to watch the pharmacist who was looking at me while I asked for the medicine of my generation.

Then, increasingly, there was silence. The ads at the Fininvest⁴ were reduced in number. On Rai⁵ there was almost nothing. Hence a few left the group. This was like madness to me. Neocibalgina was part of us, I tried to explain, and television had only sent out the signal.

We live in order to gain happiness. Michela justified the crisis with the normal monthly cycles. Another, impressed by

⁴ Fininvest is Prime Minister Berlusconi's company which controls a number of private television channels.

⁵ Rai = Radio televisione italiana, the Italian official broadcaster.

the severe-looking package of aspirins, found excitement in transgression. Though grown up before his time, he would one day rejoin the group. Others, more taken up with frivolous things, were probably wasting their adolescence with Aspro.

Young people should stay together. Share the same things. Now there's only me, Michela and Giuseppe. Piazza delle Fontane gets sadder and sadder. We look into each other's eyes and we know that we have a remedy for menstrual pains. This, of course, applies to Michela. Giuseppe, who is a heavy smoker, with Neocibalgina he can smoke up to three packets a day, and he gets over it.