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A Transaesthetic Interpretation of *Pamięć nareszcie / Memory at Last* by Wisława Szymborska¹

Abstract

This essay attempts to combine several elements relevant for such interpretative practices as hermeneutics, textual explication, speech acts theory, C. G. Jung's analytical psychology, as well inspirations taken from ritual studies, archetypal literary criticism, and transcendental hermeneutics. This combination of interpretational practices shall be applied to the reading and analysis of Wisława Szymborska's poem *Pamięć nareszcie / Memory at Last*. My chief aim is to analyse the ritual dimension of the poem (without disregarding, however, the work's stylistic features).

Keywords: transaesthetic interpretation, ritual, syncretism, analytical psychology, hermeneutic circle, textual explication, archetypal interpretation, Wisława Szymborska, Carl Gustav Jung.

¹ This article is dedicated to Zuzanna Topolińska, my long-time colleague at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

1. Introduction to the ritual of interpretative synchronism

Interpretative pluralism in literary hermeneutics allows for prospective actualizations of older models of interpretation. This pluralism is not a phenomenon of some chronological succession, or some kind of a methodological accumulation, but a result of the development and revision of the already established interpretational matrices. In this context, it includes the option of employing an interpretative synchronism in the process of interpretation. Today we can legitimately pose the question of whether we can or cannot combine different interpretative practices when interpreting a literary text. As the question itself is rhetorical, the answer can only be implied. My quest for an interpretative synchronism that can be used multiple times brought me to the understanding of the complementarity of several interpretational practices. These were inherited from the period between the beginning of the nineteenth and the end of the twentieth century. I am referring to the practices known as: the hermeneutic circle (or circular interpretation, circular hermeneutics), textual explication, hermeneutics of style, analytic psychology (archetypal interpretation) and, ultimately, transcendental hermeneutics (as a general category) and the strategy of ritual catharsis (as its specific branch). This article, therefore, gives the basis of a potential ritual-cathartic interpretation of literary texts, through the example of interpretation of one, particular poem. It starts as an expression of passion toward interpretation and ends as an analysis of the act of interpretation. The pervasive spiritual and emotional challenges encourage the rite of creation. At a given moment, this rite of creation is intersected by the rite of interpretation, creating thus space for ritual synchronism. This place is filled with cosmogonic rites, but also rites that enlighten and that give a meaning the existence of man and of nature.²

In this article, I will attempt to present literary interpretation as a sort of ritual, in hope that this practice can be replicated in other, similar situations that entail understanding of a particular poetic puzzle. I will offer a form of syncretic combination of elements taken from the following methods:

² Mircea Eliade claims that every ritual has its mythical archetype. He believes that rituals and ritual establishment of the Word were powerful practices not only in primitive societies, but also in contemporary ones. "In the Egypt of the later centuries, for example, the power of rite and word possessed by the priest was due to imitation of the primordial gesture of the god Thot, who had created the world by the force of his word" (Eliade, 1959, p. 22). After all, one of the cult places in the New Testament is dedicated to the power of the Word: "In the beginning was the Word" (in the Gospel According to John).

- 1) the hermeneutic circle;
- 2) explicative hermeneutics of style (based on the French *explication de texte*);
- 3) transcendental hermeneutics; and
- 4) analytical and psychological interpretation of the archetypes of the collective unconsciousness (through the theory of Carl Gustav Jung).³

I will focus my attention particularly on Jung's analytical psychology, in the context of ritual and cathartic hermeneutics, in the manner I have already elaborated in my study (see Footnote 3). I will explain the ritual qualities of literary texts, especially of visionary ones.

It is surprising, perhaps, to start with the ambition of re-actualizing the method of the hermeneutic circle (Ger. *Zirkel im Verstehen* or *Hermeneutischer Zirkel*) in literary interpretations, a method proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1838/1998) almost two centuries ago. It is surprising, because, on the one hand, it is considered that this method of anticipation and sympathy (Heidegger) is "metaphysical" and that it is based, in its initial phases, on intuitive hypothesis about the meaning of the text, and not on argumentation.⁴ It is surprising, because the cyclical strategy of interpretation has its roots in the philological method, by which the textual meaning is recreated from its *initial, authentic linguistic and poetic context*, and not from the additional context of the interpreter or the interpretation itself.⁵ Judging by the hermeneutic experiences of the twentieth century, this method embraces literary texts as an entirety, i.e., as a total and autonomous microcosm with boundaries designated by the author, in a broader historical, cultural, literary and psychological system. The hermeneutic circle harmonizes the interpretative phases of intuitive, analytical and retrospective textual interpretation, embedded in one indivisible and dynamic spiral act. This methodology also includes the techniques of textual explication to the point of "textual microscopy"

³ In my study *Transcendent (Literary Hermeneutics)* (Kulavkova, 2011), I have elaborated in detail the problem of relevance of the hermeneutic circle and the usability of techniques for textual explication. In the same study, I gave the basis for transcendental hermeneutics. See the reference section for this study.

⁴ Antoine Compagnon gives this explanation in his study *Le Démon de la théorie* (Compagnon, 1998), in the chapter *Philologie et herméneutique*.

⁵ Schleiermacher believes that the subject of interpretation can be properly understood only in relation to the language that both the author and the original readers were familiar with. "[...] The person of the writer was never absent for the original listeners and readers and they could only judge speech and writing in terms of the usual presuppositions" (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 57).

(Spitzer, 1970), without reducing it to a narrow space of details.⁶ I believe that the cyclical method of interpretation is still suitable for reconstruction of the *poem's totality as sense and the sense as a totality of the poem*. It is not an interpretative variant of the Vergil's wheel (*rota Vergilii*) of three styles but a ritual of interpretation that repeats the basic techniques of the poetic ritual of creation. In this sense, the poem presents a *mythical form of the ritual of interpretation*.

Jung's psychoanalytical theory, on the other hand, is complementary to the matrix of transcendental hermeneutics, especially the one that is focused on the ritual (archetypal, initiatory, cosmogonic, cathartic) role of visionary works of art. These are perceived as forms of epiphany and as instances of firsthand enlightenment and revelation, which serve as presuppositions for individuation (especially when consciousness achieves harmony with its unconscious and repressed psychic contents). The conscious and unconscious secrets and codes come to a point of interaction in art, and especially in literature, mainly due to the intimate relation between language, the conscious and the unconscious.⁷ The unconscious consists of hidden or repressed secrets associated with the thoughts of sin and sinful acts and the experience of committing sinful acts by violating that which is deemed forbidden by the religious, ethical and political institutions. There is no doubt that the notion of this secret is the prerequisite for the individualization of man in relation to the collective. It serves as an instigator of the human imagination and wish for self-awakening. But, if radicalized, this secret can transform itself in a sort of independent existence in the psyche. If this independent existence, in consequence, becomes violently and systematically suppressed and if it cuts its communicational ties with the conscious part of the individual, then it will evolve in a latent producer of numerous psychological and physical disorders (neuroses, psychoses, phobias, manias, nervous breakdowns). Not just the individual, but also a collective being can become a victim of these violent and dangerous

⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, for instance, initiated the philological practice of textual explanation as an objective and scientific endeavor, but with a stronger focus on details than on the totality of the text.

⁷ We must make a distinction between consciously hidden and unconsciously hidden secrets. "The unconscious behaves in a compensatory or complementary manner towards the conscious" (Jung, 1969, p. 69) and "the unconscious holds possibilities which are locked away from the conscious mind, for it has at its disposal all subliminal psychic contents, all those things which have been forgotten or overlooked, as well as the wisdom and experience of uncounted centuries which are laid down in its archetypal organs" (Jung, 1966a, p. 116). This means that certain contents are rooted in the collective unconscious.

changes.⁸ The divulgence of the secrets becomes a precondition for their overpowering, in order to integrate the conscious and the unconscious parts of the individual. Jung claims that our unconsciousness is composed of psychologically repressed, subdued, restricted and concealed affects (or drives, desires, emotions, needs, instincts and fears), that need to be naturally expressed. Affects, in the short term, can be strictly controlled and this conduct can prove itself useful. The control of affects can be conveyed through systematic suppression by means of self-discipline, stoicism and asceticism, through restraints and strategies that promote restraining of the vital necessities. However, “it is by no means to be assumed that all those forms of activity latent in the psyche, which are suppressed or neglected by the individual, are thereby robbed of their specific energy” (Jung, 1969, p. 124). This restraint gives birth to a culture of endurance of psychological and psychic pains and traumas, a culture of suffering, self-punishment and self-torture, in the name of a strong commitment to an ideal or belief/faith, or even fanaticism. What is more, in the long term, the repression of these affects can prove extremely dangerous, not only on individual, but also on collective level.⁹ There is nothing more dangerous than the mild harmony achieved through the restraining and suppressing of affects. The instinctual contents are to be brought in front of consciousness and “make repression unnecessary by conscious correction” (Jung, 1969, p. 365).

Interpretation of *Memory at Last...*, or for the establishment of a ritual of interpretation and cathartic syncretism

The object of an interpretation, as it is known, can be Poetry as a general category, through its different manifestations (creations). These serve as artistic existentialities and beings that are here-and-now, with the potential of projecting Poetry’s *ontos*. In this respect, works of poetry are marked by three essential characteristics. Firstly, a poem presents a ritual of enigmatic confession, a hermetic mimesis of the world (or even a cathartic recognition in the world and a distance from this very world).

⁸ Jung, in this context, emphasizes the therapeutic role of sculpture and dance, even in practices that are not legitimately artistic.

⁹ The complete disruption of the connection between the conscious and the unconscious part of an individual may lead to violent incursion of unconscious impulses. This, consequently, may cause a disruption of one’s personality. Therefore, it is vital to maintain an intimate relationship with our unconsciousness by enforcing our awareness of it and its symptoms (present in our dreams, our fantasy, creative visions, in our *lapsus linguae*, “dangerous coincidences,” invented memories and fears).

Secondly, a poem epitomizes a ritual of engendering a unique, artistic world, as part of its theoretic aspect. Thirdly, a poem performs a ritual of restoration of the poetic Being, as part of its ontological aspect. This holy trinity contributes to the qualities of authenticity and intuition of poems, and to their interpretation as well, which aims to essentially understand the world that surrounds us and not just to engage in a mere dialogue with it. To interpret a poem means to interpret the initial poetic understanding, or to interpret the “shadow of the shadows” (Plato), to renew the blissfulness of a revelation. This kind of an interpretation established a ludic act between Words and the world outside Words. We can gaze onto this poetic effulgence, this poetic Sun, only in the seconds of its rise, to catch the first glimpse of the newborn rays, before the emergence of the dazzling bliss of the wholly emerged Sun. In other words, one can equate the blissfulness of the poem with the blissfulness of the sunrise, when it not only is possible, but also desirable, to look fearlessly and wholeheartedly into the sun and to obtain all of its pure light, that pre-light we can experience without going blind.

One of my main goals in this interpretation is to see the poem as a ritual of stylized, enigmatic and hermetic confession, and, as Carl Gustav Jung pointed out, “the first beginnings of all analytical treatment of the soul are to found in its prototype, the confessional” (Jung, 1954, p. 55). We can even add that a poem presents a mystic ritual of Understanding and a ritual of Remembrance. A confession, as a technique of establishing a dialogue with the unconscious and as mastery of obtaining self-awareness, is also a skill and a magical ritual of self-realization.¹⁰ A confession is an act of remembrance of particular truths essential to our existence, especially for the beings that are here-and-now, i.e., re-humanized beings. It is a rite of illuminating of the unconscious, of spreading a clarity of awareness as an introduction to epiphany. It is an aestheticized linguistic ritual of initiation of the reader in the attempts of achieving a higher state of consciousness, as a parable of his individualization. The latter is perceived as building a union between the unconscious and the conscious part of the individual.¹¹ Finally,

¹⁰ Which designates our ability to face our dark side, but also the dark side of humanity.

¹¹ Commenting on James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Jung detects the ritualistic and magical effects of certain artistic works. With much admiration, he notes: “O *Ulysses*, you are truly a devotional book for the object-besotted, object-ridden white man! You are a spiritual exercise, an ascetic discipline, an agonizing ritual, an arcane procedure, eighteen alchemical alembics piled on top of one another, where amid acids, poisonous fumes, and fire and ice, the homunculus of a new, universal consciousness is distilled! You say nothing and betray nothing. O *Ulysses*, but you give us the works! Penelope need no longer weave her never-ending garment; she now takes her ease in the gardens of the earth, for her husband is home again, all his wanderings over. A world has passed away, and is made new” (Jung, 1966b, pp. 131–132).

a confession is a prerequisite for the Promethean creative energy and of its directing, on a collective level, that has humanization of society as its final result.¹²

I will now focus my attention on Wisława Szymborska's poem *Pamięć nareszcie* (Szymborska, 1981, p. 60; English translation *Memory at Last* – Szymborska, 1981, p. 61). In a special and memorable way, her poetry marked the twentieth century, and vice versa, the twentieth century marked her poetry. This poem actualizes the idea of a mystic marriage of the poetic, the psychological (cathartic, confessional) and the ritualistic function; it thus instigates a transaesthetic interpretative optics. Any transaesthetic function always takes place *hic et nunc* – in the act of writing, but also in the act of reading and interpreting. This is the poem in its original and translated to English:

Pamięć nareszcie

Pamięć nareszcie ma, czego szukała.
Znalazła mi się matka, ujrzał mi się ojciec.
Wyśniłam dla nich stół, dwa krzesła.
Siedli.
Byli mi znowu swoi i znowu mi żyli.
Dwoma lampami twarzy o szarej godzinie
błyśli jak Rembrandtowi.
Teraz dopiero mogę opowiedzieć,
w ilu snach się tułali, w ilu zbiegowiskach
spod kół ich wyciągałam,
w ilu agoniach przez ile lecieli mi rąk.
Odcięci – odrastali krzywo.
Niedorzeczność zmuszała ich do maskarady.
Cóż stąd, że to nie mogło ich poza mną boleć,
jeśli bolało ich we mnie.
Śniona gawiedź słyszała, jak wołałam mamę
do czegoś, co skakało piszcząc na gałęzi.
I był śmiech, że mam ojca z kokardą na głowie.

¹² Jung reminds us of the ancient proverb “Free yourself of your possessions and you shall be received,” which allegorically confirms the necessity of a confession in order for one to be initiated into a higher state of being. This process enlightens those essential parts of the dark, unconscious contents of the human being. This is applicable for the collective situations as well.

Budziłam się ze wstydem.
No i nareszcie.
Pewnej zwykłej nocy,
z pospolitego piątku na sobotę,
tacy mi nagle przyszli, jakich chciałam.
Śnili się, ale jakby ze snów wyzwoleni,
posłuszni tylko sobie i niczemu już.
W głębi obrazu zgasły wszystkie możliwości,
przypadkom brakło koniecznego kształtu.
Tylko oni jaśnili piękni, bo podobni.
Zdawali mi się długo, długo i szczęśliwie.
Zbudziłam się. Otwarłam oczy.
Dotknęłam świata jak rzeźbionej ramy.

Memory at Last

Memory at last has what it sought.
My mother has been found, my father glimpsed.
I dreamed up for them a table, two chairs. They sat down
Once more they seemed close, and once more living for me
With the lamps of their two faces, at twilight,
they suddenly gleamed as if for Rembrandt.

Only now can I relate
the many dreams in which they've wandered, the many throngs
in which I've pulled them out from under wheels,
the many death-throes where they have collapsed into my arms.
Cut off – they would grow back crooked.
Absurdity forced them into masquerade.
Small matter that this could not hurt them outside me
if it hurt them inside me.
The gawking rabble of my dreams heard me calling "mamma"
to something that hopped squealing on a branch.
And they laughed because I had a father with a ribbon in his hair.
I would wake up in shame.

Well, at long last.

On a certain ordinary night,
 between a humdrum Friday and Saturday,
 they suddenly appeared exactly as I wished them.
 Seen in a dream, they yet seemed freed from dreams,
 obedient only to themselves and nothing else.
 All possibilities vanished from the background of the image,
 accidents lacked a finished form.
 Only they shone with beauty, for they were like themselves.
 They appeared to me a long, long time, and happily.

I woke up. I opened my eyes.

I touched the world as if it were a carved frame.

The poem *Pamięć nareszcie* instigates “more than just aesthetic effect” and it is “the objectivity of psychic experience” (Jung, 1953, p. 182); it also presents “a thorough confession” (Jung, 1969, p. 136). This points to a centripetal, autotelic and self-sufficient function of the text. If the trans-aesthetic experience is related to the aesthetic influence, then the aesthetic function does not exhaust itself. Instead, it too is connected with certain additional extended actions (such as magical, transformational, and psychological). I might add, using Jung’s opinion on the dramatic illusion in Goethe’s *Faust*, that Szymborska’s poem presents “an admission of the objectivity of psychic experience, a whispered avowal that this was what *actually happened*, not because of subjective wishes, or fears, or personal opinions, but somehow quite of itself” (Jung, 1953, p. 182; original emphasis). The initial interpretative circle, which we can sense here in a sympathetic way (that is, intuitively), the meaning behind *the wholeness of the poem* (since we analyze its segments at a micro-level, but we interpret the poem as a whole!), calls for the following realizations:

- Firstly, after a long time, *nareszcie* (*at last*) (the *second key phrase* in this poem, right after the word *pamięć* [*memory*]), the deceased mother and father reappear in a dream, just like the lyrical subject had desired it. The memory in the dream is fictional, but stands as a powerful recreation of what was once reality. I will digress for a bit, in order to clarify the subject in the poem, who ritually remembers. The lyrical subject is represented as a projection of the poet’s identity. Namely in Szymborska’s poetry, we can notice a conscious intention of combining/correlating the biographical (historic) and lyrical (transcendental) identity. The poet intentionally pinpoints that she is free from the frustration persistently

underlying the difference between her, as a real historical person, and the lyrical subject, as a fictional category. This is the case not only in *Pamięć nareszcie*, but in her poetic system as a whole. Szymborska's poetry boldly poses the question: why would not I, the author of the poem, and the lyrical I in the poem, share our identities? Why must we, at any cost, support the stigma of an absolute difference and distance? Is not mimesis interested in itself? Am I, as an author, not part of this world? Am I only an observed subject?

- Secondly, the final, harmonized, humanized and “naturalized” world, where the late mother and father reappear as dream-like figures, comforts the daughter. Finally, once again, the lost order has been re-established or amidst the chaos an order has been formed. At last, the necessary (psychological) conditions have been created, so the lyrical subject can live with a lighter burden on her soul, with an appeased darkness (Shadow) and with more relaxed unconsciousness. There, at last, comes a period of calmness, as the result of the internal truce between the conscious and the unconscious contents, between the drive (desire) and reason, between the inarticulate images and the articulated “story.”¹³ The anamnesis in the poem may begin. The ritual is set in motion.

Several questions arise here: Is this an introduction to some sort of auto-therapy? Is the dream an epiphany which allows us to release ourselves from the neurosis of the unfulfilled desire and from the unease (anxiety) that maybe *we* are the reason why we remember our loved ones in an inappropriate way, as senseless, deformed, idiotic, animalized and magical? Can the anomalies of the dream images (there is a reverse imagology, isn't there?) serve as particular and separate rhetorical techniques? Are they a style of figurative thinking and remembrance, an unknown poetics that needs deciphering in order to be acquired as a boon (or a benefit, a satisfaction, some sort of value)? Is the dream *a confrontation* with the trauma, bearing in mind that this confrontation takes place under aestheticized, stylized and ritualized circumstances, in order to finally free ourselves from it? Of what kind, at last, is the discourse of the dream? How is the language of the dream codified? If it is a language, does that imply that we can learn it and read it? Is the poem a ritual of decoding the secret language of the dream?

It is clear that one needs to explain certain segments of the text through a kind of detailed *explication of the text* of the poem. In regards to this interpretative project, I came to the following conclusions:

¹³ The hermeneutic code is tied to the proairetic code of the story and the actions. In Szymborska's poem, there are even narrative elements, a certain Story that can be reconstructed.

- The basic semantization of the lyrical syntax is established in the first verse, between the memory and the affectionate adverb *nareszcie* (which indicates the presence of suppressed personal contents); with that, a starting distance is drawn between the subject who remembers and the memory itself: “Pamięć nareszcie ma, czego szukała.”¹⁴
- Memory gains the long-sought reality of the dream — the regained lost mother and father. The poet says, *in medias res*: my memory found that which it had looked for a long time.
- The emphasis on the prolonged time, on the prolonged absence, on the enervating quest, on the extended anarchy/autonomy of the dream (and, as a result, the long-lasting psychological trauma), stresses the stylistic effect and the progressiveness of this poem.
- The time-spaces of the dream and the poem differ, and that means they may be identified with one another. The distance between the two media – that of the dream (the hypnotic) and that of the poem (the poetic) – is emphasized through the hyperbole of temporality, in order to be cancelled out in the moment when the long awaited occurs. The occurrence happens in the memory of the subject, i.e., in the poetic anamnesis. This serves as a signal that the subject of the poem has certain experiences with the culture of self-traumatization and that she is familiar with the skill of anamnesis.

The dream is, to a great extent, autonomous, as is the human soul. It seems to me that even by calling it human, we are already hurting that part of the soul which is divine, demonic, otherworldly, let us say, supernatural! Memory is transformed into something which resembles both the dream and the soul: thus, memory, too, gains a certain kind of independence, and with that, a magical power. If man, among other things, presents a parable of nature, then he has close encounters with the supernatural through his oneiric, psychic and mnemonic experiences. The dream, the soul and the memory form an entirety that is constantly present, in us, with us, yet out of our reach. This unreachability awakens a sense of nostalgia and a yearning to seek out the entirety. It is unreachable not because it does not exist, but due to the fact that it disintegrates and disassembles, for it roams the dark enclaves of the beings that are here-and-now. It is under the pressure of the repressed contents (from the personal unconscious), under the threat of oblivion and of the intention of having order (the world) turned into disorder (chaos). The poem has the power to re-establish the long lost Entirety, to establish the necessary harmony that is needed to survive as a person, with integrated conscious and unconscious halves, initiated in the serenity of the Self.

¹⁴ “Memory at last has what it sought.”

For this to take place, we need, first and foremost, a story that will *prefigure* the past into a history (according to Paul Ricoeur's terminology – cf. Ricoeur, 1983, 1984) and that will shape That which was an intuitive sensing in the living word, into a language. With this, the suppressed and the unconscious (the collective and the individual) contents will be articulated as constitutive parts of Consciousness, i.e., in *the already-established consciousness*, with the help of the Sun of poetry. The story presents primordial interpretative practice and this is a condition for our *being* and *existing* as Humans. The story opens *warm transitions* between the conscious and the unconscious, between the possible and the impossible. As a language, it is already a form of a world and consciousness; it differs from the non-linguistic and real world, since it is a linguistic and imaginary world where different rules abide. It is exactly these different, metaphysical rules in the world of the story that are our chance to have the impossible, the unreal happen.

And if, for a moment, we forget that that which we had secretly desired to have happen did happen but only in the dream/vision and in the imaginary world of the poem (the novel, short-story, drama), then, for that moment, the distinction between the dream and the reality will be erased. We experience reality, in the dream, as authentic, *as-if-it-is-reality*. Sometimes there are indications that reality is something else, and that which takes place in a dream is but a dream and not a reality; those, however, are the dreams where the ritual of individuation did not occur. This ritual implies a temporary, but rather effective way to forget that there is a difference between dreams and reality. And when something like a transformation of a consciousness occurs, then it becomes irrelevant if it took place in a dream or in reality. What matters is that it looked convincingly enough, so that it fulfilled its mission of initiating the subject into a higher consciousness. Or, to put it differently, this mission is also a mission of ritualistic and cathartic purification of the unconscious contents that pressed down the soul for far too long, polluting the spaces not only of the Soul, but of the Body as well. And if this kind of cleansing occurs, and the lightening of the dark contents does happen, then it will be irrelevant if the ritual of purification took place in a dream or while the dreamer is awake. What would matter is that it indeed happened! Even better, the dream and the imaginary world of the poem are the corrective limitations of the material reality that has been subjected to numerous obstacles: mortality, powerlessness, moral and legal bans and “hubris” (errors of understanding, recognition and socialization).

Thus begins the story of the subject in the poem *Pamięć nareszcie*, a story that starts with its end and gradually moves backwards. If the end of this story is cathartic, and, perhaps even more so, ecstatic, then the beginning and the course of “the story” (even before it turns into a story!) is

traumatic, frustrating, agonizing, shocking. The lyrical subject starts short, elliptical, selective, but also striking confession through retrospection and reminiscence, in the personal world (of the Shadows). What a poetic and hermeneutic ritual!

A confession always refers to certain elements of the past, but it takes place *hic et nunc*. Hence, a confession is a ritual whence the subject, here-and-now, frees himself from the past via words. The words, hence, articulate, and with that awake, that which had taken place (in the past, in reality, in life). In this manner, a confession reconstructs those conscious and unconscious aspects of the subject and information that he does not want to entrust to someone else, not even to himself. These would otherwise not be considered as suppressed unconscious contents. A confession is not entirely predictable, for in a crucial/climactic moment, its language starts to act independently, autonomously, freely, and with that, it starts to reign over the subject. Thus, in fact, the co-relation and unification of the contents of the unconscious and the conscious take place. This means that a confession has a *psychagogic* role, and with that, it assists the process of initiation and individuation of the individual. If a confession takes place in a poetic form, in an artistically ritualized way, then the poem is also experienced (at one level) as a ritual of initiation, as a vision or as a revelation without which the dark enclaves of the human psyche cannot be brought into the light.

In Szyborska's poem we are told, right from the first stanza (or segmented whole), that in the moment when the lyrical subject found *that* which she had been looking for, the faces of her beloved mother and father were lit up by two light-bulbs, two sources of light, the kind of lights that we often encounter in Rembrandt's pieces. This is, in fact, the parable of consciousness given in Szyborska's language; here lies the first metaphor about life and the naturalness of man – the light in the twilight of un-being and un-consciousness. Here lies the passing image of the resurrection of the spirits of the dead, in the metaphysical language of the dream. Here lies the moment of revelation! Right here in the dream, in that vestibule of the seeming chaos and illusions, emerges the light, and consciousness is established in a new imaginary world with strong psychagogic and transformative power.

The second segmented entirety is reserved for retrospection of the invasion of the unconscious, from the position of someone who has been enlightened and can now make an open and honest confession (and can a confession be anything but open and honest?). Described in this segment is, once again, the unbearably long agony of the deformed projections of the mother and the father through various dreams, namely through the

intimate imagology of the poet: torn apart, deformed, monstrously shaped, caricatured, grotesque reflections of the rational terms for (emotional and moral) beauty. The last verse of this sequence ends with a striking confession: “Budziłam się ze wstydem.”¹⁵ Was this the source of *the agony’s agony*, that shame of the appearance of that which we seek, the realization that we had wanted something which was not really something to be wanted, that we had called someone “mamma,” a creature that did not resemble a mother, that we had called someone “dad,” a creature which had a ribbon in his hair, just like a woman...? Is this the reason to suppress the urges in a secret that cannot be shared with anyone, not even with one’s own self? Is this the cruel absence of Language? Being denied a confession? The absence of catharsis?

The introductory scene repeats in the third segment of the poem, now enriched with other details, and this part no longer seems like something that took place in the past (and is as such left to oblivion), but rather as something that takes place *hic et nunc*, in the a-temporal space of the poem. In the strongly present act of communing with the poem (the experiencing of the poem which no longer is just an individual act of the author, but also enters spaces outside of him), the poem emerges as a unique entity (*ontos*) in the consciousness and in the world of the reader. The poet says: “No i nareszcie,”¹⁶ as if they were still here, as if being pointed out and named made them present even without the space that they occupy, inhabit, which they shape...

In this act of making present the absent contents through the aestheticized sojourn of the *hic et nunc*, other limits and identities are shifted. The parents appear in a dream freed from the dream itself, freed from the influences of others, even from the Shadow of their daughter’s memory, protected by influences of coincidences, beautiful, bright, like themselves, just like they used to be and just like they should have been committed to memory! In that moment precisely, a moment of a re-establishing of the true identity of the mother and the father, the internal harmony of the daughter’s personality is established, once again, and the presence of beauty and luck is foreshadowed. This moment of resurrecting the psychic state of being fulfilled with a feeling of something beautiful and happy, is the moment of the performed leap from the state of agony to the state of serenity. It is an act of a renewed integration of the disassembled fragments of the persona, an act of individuation that has been made possible through the dream. And so, the poem becomes an unorthodox format of remembrance, an enlightening catharsis, a confession, a creation of a world in language and through language, as an irreplaceable personal

¹⁵ “I would wake up in shame.”

¹⁶ “Well, at last.”

experience.¹⁷ After this *mystical meeting* with one's own whole takes place – this alchemist marriage between the dark and the light, the unconscious and the conscious – the persona can awake, can be resurrected, healed and put together as a whole. The lyrical subject awakes, ritualistically, and the world is no longer amorphic; it has a finely carved frame instead, it has the frame of the poem, of language – until the next temptation in front of one's own Shadow and in front of humanity's Shadow.¹⁸

Remembering Szymborska's poem: Interpretation at last

If the poem, as ontologically conceived and aesthetically activated *perfect speech act* (Culler, 2001, pp. 128–129), performs a discrete ritualistic, transformational and psychological role, it means that we may encounter in poetry remnants of dramatic discourse, ritualistic theatre and ritual.¹⁹ The poem belongs to the phenomenon of the ritualistically-dramatic, if it is understood as a linguistic form that can transform the inner world of man. Poetry is language in its aesthetic usage. In this context, the interpretation of the poem is not just a mere meta-textual rendering, rather a ritual of transformation, of enlightenment, of ennobling, of catharsis. It serves as a prerequisite for man's coming to terms with an absurdity or certain existential inevitabilities (loss of close ones, mortality, burdensome reality). The more impenetrable the text subjected to interpretation is, the greater the need to be careful in the analysis of the context which holds the constitution of the textual meanings.

If there is development, it means that that which was in the beginning chaotic, shapeless, senseless, even evil, becomes, in fact, good through the process of individuation and formation. The hermeneutic circle of existence is spiral and in constant movement, never closes nor stops. And in Szymborska's poem, there is a kind of inception and a kind of purpose, that, near the end, tie in, as a kind of reverence of existence, of the journey of the being in search of its own *meaning of existence* (its own Way or Tao). The revelation of the meaning of existence is renewed as a happening through the new experiences of the poem, by the new readers who are on their way to consciousness, on the road to individuation and transformation of the

¹⁷ Jung states that the development of a person is a very fortunate event that has a high price (Jung, 1966a, s. 64–113).

¹⁸ History would not exist without language, believes Heidegger, and due to this fact, language, the most dangerous of goods, has been given to man, "so that he may bear witness to what he is" (Heidegger, 2000, p. 51).

¹⁹ Independent of the institutionalized artistic practices.

unconscious into the conscious, of the primordial evil into good, on the road to creating works which testify to the character of a person. One does not become a person automatically, without deeds, misconceptions, without temptations of reconsidering the chaos, without facing the ephemeral and the metaphysical.

In the world of the poem, without a doubt, the chasm between the real and the imaginary, the real and the possible, is outgrown. In the world of the poem, ritualistically and cathartically, the logical, ontological and phenomenological paradox of space and time, of subject and object, of the past and the present, is annulled. The desired is fulfilled, and, aside from the fact that this revelation is a figment of the imagination, it has its own shelf-life in the aesthetic memory. In the realms of memory, however, the borders between what has happened and what has not, between what was possible and what was not, are erased. The erasing of borders is as ritualistic as it is cathartic. The poetic world does not know the limitations of the tangible material reality. It is open to new forms of existence. This illustrates its immanent duality and the quality to be a higher level composite of a world-inside-a-world, of a text-inside-a-text, of meaning-inside-a-meaning, of a fragile but resilient meta-being. The poem and the interpretation are mutually ritualized. This aesthetically-hermeneutic ritualization of the world is a significant creator in the humanization of humanity, for it harmonizes the contents of the individual and the collective conscious and unconscious through the act of understanding.

The understanding of the real, possible and probable worlds is legitimized as a supreme civilizational act. Yet, there are limitations to the interpretative combinations as a variant of the creative interpretative freedom. These limitations are signalized in multiple ways: with the text that is the subject of interpretation, with the interpretative intentions, and with the methodology of the hermeneutic practice. And the frameworks of freedom and of determination behind the interpretation are always established in a specific interpretative context, which – if methodical – can then be repeated, ritualized and established as a collective and legitimate interpretative practice. It is, however, good to know in advance that interpretation supports certain methodology and systematization and, thus, rules ensuring freedom, but not absolute freedom, which always ends with anarchy, and – in the most extreme of instances – with new dogmatism.

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Wiersz Pamięć nareszcie Wisławy Szymborskiej. Interpretacja transestetyczna

Niniejszy esej jest próbą połączenia kilku elementów pełniących ważną rolę w takich praktykach interpretacyjnych jak hermeneutyka, eksplikacja tekstu, teoria aktów mowy, psychologia analityczna C. G. Junga, a także inspiracji płynących z badań nad rytuałem i archetypami, wreszcie z hermeneutyki transcendentnej. Połączenie wymienionych praktyk interpretacji będzie służyło lekturze i analizie wiersza Wisławy Szymborskiej *Pamięć nareszcie*. Moim głównym celem jest analiza rytualnego wymiaru wiersza (choć także jego cech stylistycznych).

Note

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