Choosing between Two Evils

Several years ago, around 1998, I wrote a poem entitled ‘Temptation’, with a motto taken over from the *Old Testament*, the First Book of Moses (Genesis) 22:7: “My Father: and he said, Here am I my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” In that poem I poetically interpreted God’s attempt to test Abraham’s loyalty by putting him in a position to choose between Him – God and his own child, his son Isaac. God Almighty puts Abraham in a grotesque position to give up his son, to forsake his dearest and, which is more, to destroy his dearest, to put him to death, slay him, kill him and burn him with the excuse of (ritual?) sacrifice. The reason for such a sacrifice is God Almighty’s capricious wish to test Abraham’s loyalty to Him, the supreme father, to the law of God. To prove that his loyalty to God is greater and more important than his love for his own child, god-fearing Abraham sets forth on an agonising journey to the land of Moriah, to the woods of temptation, the nightmare of humankind, where he builds the pyre upon which to lay his own son instead of a lamb or like a lamb, and put him to death.

Katica Kulavkova

The Moriah Nightmare: Hermeneutics of the Grotesque Temptation

Izbor među dve zla

Пред неколку години, около 1998 година, напишав една песна под наслов „Искушение: актуализация“, со мото пре-земено од Старото Завет, Првата книга Моисиева, Глава 22, 7: „Оче! А он рече: што, сине? И рече Исак: еве оган и дрва, но каде е жртвениот јагне?“ Во таа песна го толкував, на поетски начин, обидот на Господ да ја тестира верноста на Авраам кон него, ставајки го во ситуација да бира меѓу Него - Бог и своето чедо, син му Исак. Господ Бог го става Авраам во гротеска ситуација да се откаже од својот син, да се откаже од најмилото, и повеке од тоа, да го сотре најмилото, да го усмерти, да му нанесе смрт, да го уби, да го спали, под форма на (обредно?) жртвување. Причината за таквата жртва е каприцозната желба на Господ Бог да ја искуша верноста на Авраам спрема него, врховниот татко, божиот закон. Авраам, за да докаже дека верноста спрема Бога е поголема и поважна од љубовта спрема сопственото чедо, и со многу страв од Бога, тргнува на мачниот пат кон земјата Морија, шумата на искушението, ноќната мора на човештвото, каде што ја подготвува кладата на којашто треба да го положи, наместо јагне или како јагне, својот син Исак, и да му нанесе смрт.

Катица Кулавкова

Мората на Морија: херменевтика на гротескното искушение
Using Isaac’s question as a motto for the poem, I pointed to the notion that he had sensed his father’s intentions and that he had realised what he, his father and God were involved in: Isaac saw that there was no other sacrificial lamb but himself, although there had to be one for the sake of the ritual and tradition; he knew very well that an offering had to be made; Abraham bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood (“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son” says the First Book of Moses 22:10). Isaac had enough evidence and other (linguistic and extralinguistic) references to doubt his father’s acts and the naturalness (humanity) of the situation.... After God’s intervention, Isaac the victim turned into a witness. Isaac witnessed his father’s journey and his drama of being torn on the tenterhooks between God and his own son. Evil can be seen as a necessary choice between two goods, where one good needs to be put to death. Whatever good he chooses, he is bound to injure someone. This is how we might interpret the first temptation that God devised for Abraham: to choose between two goods, to take sides, to polarise and crucify himself forever. The choice is exclusive and a model for an either-or situation. One excludes the other but both are necessary to remain human. It is a tragic human position. The cross of the tempting crucifixion between two goods has turned into a choice of evil and its relevance has never been lost, reappearing at various times and in various places.

Искушение: да се даде смрт

Кон крајот на 2004 година, ja прочитав книгата на Жак Дерида, Donner la mort (Paris, 1999). Долго...
To render a wrong translation of the title would be to misinterpret the book. A correct translation of the title is a prerequisite for a correct interpretation of a given text. I simply could not reconcile the concept with the way the French expression and the title of the book were translated into Macedonian – *Bestowing Death*. Jacques Derrida’s study *Literature Secretly* (the second part of *Giving Death*) weaves itself around the central motif of the sacrifice of Isaac – the son, by Abraham – the Father. Derrida points precisely to the act of killing or putting another to death, with a traditionally symptomatic history and ethically problematic value. ‘Bestowing death’ rather brings to mind situations in which death would be a better choice than life, circumstances of needful and, in this sense, desired death or euthanasia – that is, situations like Seth’s, who, in a moment of distress and horror, decides to put her beloved daughter to death, thinking that it is the only way to save her from slavery, which to her is more horrific than death itself (Tony Morrison, *Beloved*). In the sacrifice of Isaac death is no gift. Death is about to be inflicted; he is to be put to death.

There are indeed several good reasons why I read and interpret Derrida’s book through the lens of killing. *Putting to Death. Inflicting Death. Killing*. Reaching for another’s life. Not once. Several times. Imperfective aspect. Life is a continuous temptation, an ongoing temptation, a grossly long and shocking process of tempting someone else and oneself. For the temptation to become grotesque, it should be directed against something/someone that/who would be the least ex-

vreme размислував околу насловот на оваа книга и како той да се преведе на македонски. Да се даде смрт, Да се нанесе смрт, Давање смрт, Да се усмртува, или Да се дава смрт. Убијање. Да се преведе погрешно насловот е како се сфатила погрешно книгата. Да се преведе правилно насловот е предуслов за правилно толкување на еден текст. Мене никако не ми се вклопуваше во неговата концепција преводот на францускиот израз и наслов на книгата со македонското Дарување смрт. Студијата на Жак Дерида Книжевноста йајно (вториот дел од Давање смрт) се испишува околу стожерниот мотив на жртвувањето на Исак - синот, од Авраам - Таткото. Дерида упатува токму на усмртувањето и убивањето на другиот, со традициски симптоматична историја и етички проблематична вредност. Дарувањето смрт повеќе не потсетува на ситуација во коиот смртта би можела да биде подобра варијанта за избор од животот, во услови на нужна, и во таа смисла посаку-вана смрт или евтаназија, односно во ситуации кои потсетуваат на онаа во којашто Сета ја усмртува својата љубена керчица мислејки, во миг на безумие и ужаснатост, дека тоа е единствен начин да ја спаси од ропството кое во нејзините очи е пострашно и од самата смрт (Тони Морисон, Љубена). Жртвувањето на Исак не е дарување смрт. Тоа е давање смрт, тоа е усмртување.

Постојат навистина неколку добри причини поради кои што јас ја читам и ја толкувам книгата на Дерида низ оптиката на усмртувањето. Усмртување. Да се усмртува. Да се убива. Да се посега по животот на другиот. Не еднаш. Повеќе пати. Несвршен глагол. Животот е постојано искушение, искушение во процес, невкусно долг и шокантен процес на искушување на другиот и самоискушување. За искушението да стане гротескно, треба да биде упатено на нешто/
некого за што/за кого што најмалку би се очекувало дека може да стане предмет на усмерување и на одземање на животот. Искушението станува гротески под услов да посакува да го умрети најмилото, најблиското, обожуваното, значи нешто свето, нешто кое е дел од човековиот идентитет, нешто без кои што се обезвредува постоењето, се обесмислува животот. Искушението е гротески кога на масовната гробница на историјата таткото го фрла не само синот единец, туку целиот свој пород и народ, со нив и културата, традицијата, јазикот.

Искушение се нарекува состојба во којашто човек мора да бира меѓу две нешта без коишто не може да остане соема човек, оти се коси со принципот човечност (да се потсетиме на Изборот на Софија, на пример!). Стварноста изгледа има некоја божја димензија и подзаборава на милостта, па го става човека во ситуација да станува се помалку човек, што е можно помалку човечен, да стане бестијален, чудовишен, садистичен, смртоносен... Да, тоа би можело да биде добар превод на насловот на книгата на Дерида - Носење смрţi. Да се донесе некому смрт значи да му се одземе животот. Книгата на Дерида може да се преведе, значи, и како Одземање живот.

Чудно, ама во македонскиот јазик не постои вообичаен израз за давање смрт. Постои само придевата смртоносен. Постои глаголот усмерува. Тоа е необично, дотолку повеќе што постои противниот израз - да се даде живот. Во македонскиот јазик мошне добро е легнат токму овој израз давање животи, сдавање живот, вдихнување живот, оживотворување, оживување и други изрази поврзани со раѓањето. Тоа, парадоксално, можеби значи дека таму каде што има премногу раѓање, всуност има премногу повторно раѓање, односно дека имало премногу.

Temptation is a situation in which one must chose between two things without which one cannot fully remain human, as the choice is inconsistent with the principle of humanity (let us, for example, remember Sophie’s Choice!). Reality seems to have some divine dimension and, forgetting mercy, leaves one in a position to become increasingly less human, as less humane as possible, bestial, monstrous, sadistic, death-bringing [deadly].... Yes, that could be a good title for Derrida’s book – Bringing Death. To bring someone death is to take someone’s life. So, Derrida’s book could also be translated as Taking Life.

Strangely, there isn’t an expression in the Macedonian language for giving death. There is only the adjective deadly. We have a verb which means put to death. This is unusual, more so because we have the opposite expression – to give life. Precisely the expression to give life is embedded well in our language – life-giving, breathe life into [inspire], vivify, revive and other expressions related to giving birth. Paradoxically, perhaps this means that where there is too much birth, there is too much rebirth – that is, that there has been too much death, too many deaths have been died, too many deaths have been
Дефил," премногу примена смрт, премногу нанесување смрт (од некого друг и/или од самиот себе). Историски погледнато, тоа не е нелогично. Македонскиот идентитет е под постојана захана за разорување и во постојан стремеж да се потврди, да се докаже, да се востанови, да се актуализира, да се препознае, да се одбрани. Смртта демне зад сеое раѓање. Има надеж, македонскиот идентитет повторно ќе се прероди на својот простор. Тоа е прашање на визија, на стратегија, на верба и на љубов. Само љубовта може да соз-даде нов живот. Ете како, асоцијативно, преку љубовта, дознаваме како давањето живот е создавање, творештво, уметност. Опстанокот е уметност. Овде-битието е во дослуш со Битието.

Ишкушението станува гротескно кога е промислено, свесно, кога е плод на личен избор. Вистинското искушение е гротескно, апорично. Не би имало искушение ако, да речеме, едно усмртување е починето во миг на безумие, или затоа што така морало во услови на природна катастрофа или несреќен случај. Има, меѓутоа, искушение, кога усмртувањето е починето по слободна волја, колку оваа и да има изговор дека немала друг избор, дека била приморана или дека постоел некој друг изговор и некоја друга виша сила и инстанца. Има искушение кога има време и услови да се промисли одлуката, да се изградат критериуми, да се направи херархија на вредности, да се преземат одбранбени мерки, да се надмудри системот, да се избегне ситуацијата или-или, а ако веќе мора да се живее таквата ситуација или-или, да се биде подготовен за жртвата, за саможртвата и за последиците од определбата/изборот меѓу двата (символички) закона, меѓу двете опции - Бог или Синот.

Temptation becomes grotesque when it is contemplated; conscious, when it is the fruit of one’s own choice. The true temptation is grotesque, aporic. There would not be any temptation if, say, the killing is done in a moment of derangement or because it had to be so at a time of a natural catastrophe or accident. There is, however, temptation when the killing is done by one’s free will, regardless of one’s claims that there is no other choice, that the choice is forced or that there is some other excuse or superior power or authority. There is temptation when one has enough time and room to contemplate one’s decision, build criteria, establish a hierarchy of values, take defensive steps, outsmart the system, and get around the either-or situation. If, however, one must live in such an either-or situation, one must be prepared for the sacrifice, the self-sacrifice and the consequences of one’s decision/choice to abide by either of the (symbolic) laws; one must be prepared for the consequences of choosing either option – God or the Son.
There is temptation when one can awake one’s own will and stand in the shoes of someone forced to choose between becoming or not becoming a murderer, putting one’s own child to death or not, betraying one’s god or not, changing one’s god or parting with him. Abraham has a certain freedom to choose between the two goods, to choose whether to kill or not, to be a blind believer or a thinking and acting individual. This is what is indicated by the fact that God “opens Abraham’s eyes” at the last moment, keeping an eye on him to prevent the infanticide, as if knowing that Abraham is prepared to kill his son if he needs to, just to prove to God how great a believer he is or because he cannot overcome his fear of God. When (through Sarah, Abraham’s wife) He promises to give him a son, a new life and future for his seed, posterity, progeny and a nation, God Almighty announced Isaac as the son of God. If Abraham had stopped to think about it, he would have never thought that God would do something to kill him or banish Isaac (as He had exiled Ishmael, for example). It would be logical to expect God to protect Isaac, the child of His covenant.

There is temptation if the tempted can choose whether to identify with the law and the father or build his own projection of himself. There is temptation if one is in a position to overthrow one’s tyrant father and thus avoid the destiny of being the executioner of the virtues of humanity. There is temptation when one can chose whether to go on seeing one’s father as a lawmaker or to rebel against a law (religion, ideology) that requires one to put one’s dearest – one’s Son – to death. There is temptation when the Son may become a father and assert his own new Law and thus prevent infanticide and ritual sacrifice of progeny, of future. But the sons
brought up in the spirit of tyranny quite often become tyrants themselves. Therefore, it takes a large gap, supreme consciousness and self-control to change the world radically and humanise it.

Relativising the Secret

There are two secrets in Moses’ story of Abraham and Isaac. First, it is the secret that God kept from Abraham, so that He could tempt him (had he told him everything openly, there would not have been any temptation), asking him to sacrifice his own son. Second, it is the secret that Abraham kept from Isaac when he told him that he was taking him to the Moriah wood, to the rite of sacrifice, but failed to tell him who the sacrifice would be. Abraham’s intention to kill his son is the reason for keeping the secret, the motive for a secret and a secret talk. Sacrifice, the secret, and holy talk are all closely

vo духот на тираните. Затоа е потребен голем јаз, висока свест и самоконтрола, за да се промени рационално светот во смисла на негова хуманизација.

Relativising the Secret

The fundamental question that arises from the temptation relationship God – Abraham – Isaac concerns the secret and how (not) to divulge it. Relativising God’s absolute secret, by interpreting that God shares His secret with man, is a way of de-sacralising it. Undoubtedly, the Holy Book has been inherited and it is an inherent memory and a testament of the sacral, but it too is a writing form and a form of literature, and therefore it re-tells the secret of its code language and shares it with man. How to hide a horrible and absolute secret as God’s secret is? Can this secret, at a time when it also becomes Abraham’s, be absolute? How is a secret made and why is it kept? Does hermeneutics deal with the absolute secret?

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The secret has been enough dented, gnawed and exposed to cease to be quite a secret. God's absolute secret becomes man's relative secret. By sharing the absolute secret with man, through language – as the common place of God and man – God has come to terms with the fact that the secret is no longer absolute; that it is no longer his only. A secret shared (with another) is no longer absolute. A secret witnessed even by a single witness is not absolute. The other goes with a third. Every man vis-à-vis God is the Other. A shared secret cannot be controlled. It is a voice that flies away. The human secret is shared; it is a secret between people and thus it becomes partial. However forbidden, the shared secret is always seen or heard, reported, written or hinted by someone else. In this world there is no such thing as a perfect secret.

The absolute secret is not shared. If man is the Other in the eyes of God, then God tells the secret to the Other. God is no longer alone when he is with man. The stakes are high. Wherever there is man, there is risk involved.
Avraham does not tell the secret to anyone using words but a secret can also be betrayed through other signs and languages, even through unsaid or absent words, whose absence sometimes becomes symptomatic and eloquent. The semantics of absent or unsaid words is the essence of hermeneutics (ερµενεια - ancient Greek for to express, clarify and interpret something that has not been said clearly). 4

By keeping the secret, God is tempting Abraham. Doing the same, Abraham is tempting himself and, what is more, he is consciously preparing to kill his son. When Isaac asks where the sacrificial lamb is, Abraham replies “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering”. Again he fails to tell the truth, again he avoids to confess and speaks directly (unambiguously). Abraham uses double meaning, misleading Isaac and leaving him in uncertainty, while leaving himself room for retreat, excuse, justification or alibi. Abraham will always be able to excuse himself saying that there was a misunderstanding between him and his son, that he was misunderstood, that he was only joking and wanted to scare him, that he was misinterpreted, that his act was taken out of context and so on. In a way, Abraham puts the blame on God. Abraham would agree to any sacrifice God would ask from him.

If one keeps silent and refrains from speaking, it does not necessarily mean that one is practising the discourse of the lie. Everyday talk does not exclude the lie. But figurative speech, be it sacralised or literary, is neither true nor false. Figurative speech is the speech of semantic and interpretative temptation. Therefore, the question arises whether there is absolute silence between two hu-
Can absolute molks meet two human beings put together in an existential situation? To turn the secret into silence is to turn one secret speech into another. This transformation is accompanied by a certain amount of residue, with a certain denotation that does not necessarily have to be linguistic, but is necessarily semiotic and conveys some information.

A divulged secret has a shape, its own language, code, and – accordingly – it can be subject to interpretation. Interpretation, on the other hand, can have a myriad of forms: myth, song, story, play, script, memoirs, letter, essay... Isaac’s rhetorical question is a sign that Abraham’s secret has been exposed. If there is no perfect secret, then there is no perfect crime either. The victim is the first witness and interpreter of the crime. Isaac is both a witness and a hermeneut. It seems superfluous to speak now about the other witnesses’ (the two servants, in this case) knowledge of the secret, as their role is tangential compared to the drama unfolding between the Son, the Father and God. They record the development, like memory’s candid camera. Their picture of the events is not brought in the first plane and remains in the sphere of assumptions.

However, another moment is interesting: following the conclusion of the temptation drama, Abraham and Isaac do not exchange even a word about what has happened and what could have happened. There are no questions, no comments, no rapprochement, no excuses, no response. God resolves the drama by introducing the ritual offering – the ram. There is not a single word about how Abraham unbinds Isaac and how he sets him free from the pyre. They simply go back home in silence, as if their silence will deliver them from memory and bring them oblivion and tranquillity. Every description of the event

искушенето. Авраам и Исак не разменуват повече ни збор за тоа што се случило и за тоа што можело да се случи. Нема прашање, нема коментар, нема префрлуване, нема правдање, нема одговор. Бог ја разрешува драмата со воведување на неговата обредна жртва - овенот. Нема ни збор за тоа како Авраам го одврзува Исака и како го ослободува од кладата. Тие едноставно се враќаат домаш молкум, небаре молкот ќе ги спаси од памтењето и ќе им пружи заборав и спокој. Секое опишуване на соби-
идието е повторување на собитието и облик на помнење. Колку повеќе се повторува приказната за тоа собитие, толку подолго трае собитието. Неискажана, приказната останува во сфера на претпоставките, сè додека сосема не избледнее, слично на сон кој не е ни рассказан, ни запишан. Книжевноста е отпор против заборавот. Книжевноста опишува, запишува и памти. Поради тоа, таа е закана за онаа идеологија која сака да ја скрои или да ја ревидира историјата според своите потреби и намери, а не според стварноста, фактите и вистината.

Зошто Исак не му замерува на татка си, од каде неговиот спокој и неговата толеранција, е прашање кое заслужува посебен простор за толкување. Во оваа пригода ќе укажем само на можното тој самиот да се ставил во ситуација да одбере да го памти селективно. Нема сомнение, Исак не само што насетува што се случува, туку сфаќа што се случува. Но, тој одбива да го признае тоа јавно и со збор. Исак е во шок. Шокиран, не сака да верува во тоа што го гледа. Тоа што го гледа се разидува со неговата претстава за здравиот разум, хуманоста и етичноста. Тоа што го гледа, молсавично минува низ неговиот ум и мисла, но тој нема храброст да го именува со вистинскиот збор. Во Евангелието на Мојсеј недостасува приказната на Исак, а со тоа недостасува и неговата претстава за собитието. Сè што знаеме за неа е навестено во неговото прашање полно со чудење. Исак го избегнува вистинскиот збор, затоа што ја избегнува вистината за искушениката драма.

За да може да живее, нему му треба фигура (алузија, иронија, гротеска), која ќе ја обележи реториката на неговото постоене и која ќе биде одраз на неговото битие. А билдєјки впечатокот од тоа што го видел и го доживеал е толку силен што не може сосема is a repetition of that event and a form of memory. The more the story of the event is repeated, the longer the event lasts. Untold, the story remains in the sphere of assumptions, until it fades away completely, like a dream that has not been told or recorded. Literature is resistance to oblivion. Literature describes, records and remembers. Therefore, it is a threat to the ideology that seeks to tailor or revise history to fit its needs and purposes, not reality, facts or truth.

Why does Isaac not blame his father, where do his calmness and tolerance come from, are questions that deserve special room for interpretation. Here I will only point to the possibility that he too has put himself in a position to choose to remember the event selectively. Isaac undoubtedly not only understands but also comprehends what is going on. Yet, he refuses to utter and admit that publicly. Isaac is in shock. Shocked, he refuses to believe his eyes. What he sees contradicts his perception of common sense, humanity and ethics. What he sees passes through his mind and thought like a lightning but he lacks the courage to give it the right name. Moses’ gospel does not contain Isaac’s story, and with that we are short of his perception of the event. All we know about it is hinted in his question full of wonder. Isaac avoids the true word because he avoids the truth of the drama of the temptation.

To be able to live, he needs a figure (allusion, irony, grotesque) that will mark the rhetoric of his existence and that will reflect his being. Since what he sees and goes through is too awesome for him to pass over in silence, he utters a question that contains the answer as much as
да го премолчи, тој изустува едно прашање кое го содржи во себе одговорот онолку колку што ја содржи во себе и тајната. Исак е згрозен, втрашен и стаписан, па не му преостанува ништо друго освен да го постави, алузивно, реторичкото прашање кое, според симболичкиот код на тајната, не треба да ја разоткрива тајната со збор, туку меѓу зборови, со отсушните зборови, отаѓе јазикот. Исак ја чита тајната преку знacите кои не се јазични: таткото го зема синот со себе на чинот на жртвувањето, има клада, нема јагне, Исак е врзан над кладата, Авраам го држи ножот над него, таткото премногу молчи, а преголемото и пренапрекнатото молчење е признак на некоја голема и наметната тајна, симптом за неговата длабока потреба од надкомпензација, знак дека Авраам се плаши да не ја издаде сам тајната, знак дека живее со една неподнослива тајна.

Алузивното прашање на Исак е облик на толкување. Одговорот постои и се знае, но постои зад јазикот. Одговорот не стигнува до зборот. Одговорот мора да остане енигма и да тропа на портите на јазикот. Јазикот вели не, нема да те искажам. Ке те премолчам. Ке те кажам, премолчувайки те. Зарем тоа не ти е доволно, вели јазикот надмено, поради стравот пред човечката заслепеност и човечката подготвеност за најмонстраузни зло-дела, жртви и постапки во име на нешто „вишо“. Јазикот се блокира пред таа виша инстанца и замолчува. Тој е свесен за својата моќ. Знае дека нештата можат да се кажат меѓу редови. Јазикот знае дека постојат реторички фиџури кои кажуваат, иако не ис-кажале. Јазикот ја развива кај себе таа моќ да кажува без да изрече, да кажува низ јазични слики и обрити. Јазикот се умножува самиот на почвата на таа свест за својот капацитет да кажува не зборувавки многу или криејки ги значењата во шифри. Тој свој капацитет го изразил во повеќе дис-

Isaac’s allusive question is a form of interpretation. The answer exists and is known but it is behind language. The answer comes short of the word. It must stay an enigma and knock on the gates of language. The language says no, I will not express you. I will not utter you. I will say you without utterance. “Is not this enough?” says language haughtily because of the fear of human blindness and readiness to commit most hideous crimes, sacrifices and deeds in the name of a “higher goal”. Language is blocked faced with this higher instance and goes silent. It is aware of its power. It knows that things can be said between lines. The language knows that there are rhetorical figures that express something without it being said. Language develops in itself that power to express something without it being said, to express through linguistic images and shifts. Language multiplies itself on the soil of this awareness of its capacity to express without saying much and hiding the meanings in codes. It has shown this capacity...
in a number of discourse practices: sacral, mythic, biblical, poetic, secret languages. Language accepts the prohibition to speak openly as its own convention. This convention generates the languages that have enigmatic composition. The hermetic nature of the being becomes a hermetic nature of language. The enigmatic nature of the being becomes an enigmatic nature of language.

Through script and language, hermeneutics interprets the creations of human culture and civilisation. These are relativised here-secrets – secrets of the humans and their existence, and not the secret of the being. Once the absolute secret of the being has been relativised and has become an achievement of human culture, it can cease to be a secret [lit. be de-secretised]. Formulating a secret implies de-secretising it, just as the riddle implies that it is to be solved, just as the enigma is art because it involves the game of concealment and discernment. The fact that not everyone can solve an enigma/riddle does not prove that the enigma is inconceivable or that whoever has understood it is God’s messenger. That the secret will be interpreted subjectively and differently does not make it ungraspable; it rather opens it to the here-being (the creature) and to history; it makes it historical. The literary secret is historical, plural and composed on the secret-in-secret principle, a secret in between. The hermeneutics of the Holy Scripture has shown recently (P. Rickert, N. Frye) that even the secrets of the gospels are facing the problem of the historicity and plurality of the meaning of the text. Even the sacral texts are not free from historicity, and therefore they are spared neither of different interpretations nor different translations of the same texts.
Interpreting a secret requires appropriate knowledge of its code and respecting the rules for decoding it. Every secret that has been named is not an absolute secret (anymore). An absolute secret has no name. For, since the days of yore, man has not found the true name of God... In times of interpretative weakness, man resorts to faith that demands no words and interprets from the heart, not through mind. “Give me a word...” for Him, says man. Find me the true word, his name. Give me the right word. To have it. To grasp it. To grasp something is to have it, hold it in your hands, to have power over it. That is, to have power over the word, and thus over man. God resists. He too is not indifferent to language. He is hiding his name. He offers pseudonyms, nicknames, acronyms, everything but his real Name. The absolute secret refuses to be interpreted with words. It may be sensed intuitively, as sign or part of some vision. The absolute secret is not a (purely) human thing and it exists beyond language. It does not have a recognisable identity. The absolute secret leaves man speechless and as such, fascinated, exalted and paralysed, man cannot interpret. Perhaps that is why Isaac does not offer his version of the interpretation of the temptation.

The object of interest to hermeneutics is the shared secret. The dented silence. The word. According to Derrida, the basic reason for not telling someone anything from what one knows and has been told as a secret lies in the need to prevent “a third person” from coming between (Derrida, 1999, 203). However, it seems to me that the problem is conceived the moment the Second rather than the Third appears. Once there are two players, one of them plays the role of interpreter and, as such, is a potential transmitter of the secret and its possible solver.
**Законот на Таткото и законот на Синот - тиранитата и развластувањето**

Односите на релација Татко, Син и Светиот Дух се основа на симболичниот поредок на јазикот и на светот. Функцијата татко го менува субјектот и со тоа твори историска низа на трансфери од една генерација на друга, од родители на деца, од татко на син. Синот станува татко, а таткото син. За таткото да стане син, довољно е да биде верник и да го слуша послушно зборот на таткото - Бог. Секој верник е син Божји. За синот да стане татко, треба да го симде од власт својот татко, да го развласти, да му се спротистави на неговиот закон, да се востоличи себе во функција на татко (центар, моќ, тиранија) да воведе нов закон. Станувајќи татко, синот повторно станува син, ако во играта се вклучи Бог, а тоа е најверојатно.

Законот на Таткото е закон на тиранитата. Законот на Синот е закон на развластувањето. Колку е построг, понепопустлив и понемилосрден законот на Таткото, толку повеќе Синот е мотивиран да го дезтронизира, па и да го умрти...⁵ Таков е законот на Уран, на Хрон или Сатурн, и на Јупитер, тогаш кога тие ја вршат функцијата на Син. Кога ќе ја преземат функцијата на татко, тогаш тие и самите се предмет на развластување, а не субјекти кој развластува. Законот подразбира раѓање и воведување нов закон, законот подразбира трансфер, деликт, повреда, злостор, обнова, револуција, и така до бесконечност, затоа што нема апсолутен или совршен закон.

**The Law of the Father and the Law of the Son – Tyranny and Dethronement**

The relationships between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the basis for the symbolic order of language and the world. The function of the father changes the subject and by doing so creates a historic sequence of transfers from one generation to another, from parents to children, from father to son. The son becomes a father, the father becomes a son. For the father to become a son, it is enough for him to be a believer and obey the word of the father – God. Every believer is a son of God. For the son to become a father, he needs to remove his father from power, dethrone him, challenge his law, to install himself in the office of fatherhood (centre, power, tyranny), to introduce a new law. By becoming a father, the son becomes a son again, if God comes into the game, which is most likely.

The law of the Father is a law of tyranny. The law of the Son is a law of dethronement. The stricter, more relentless and more merciless the Father’s law is, the more motivated the Son is to dethrone him and even put him to death...⁶ Such are the laws of Uranus, Cronus or Saturn, and Jupiter, when they perform the function of being a Son. When they take over the function of fathers, they themselves are the objects of dethronement, not the subjects that dethrone. The law involves giving birth to and introducing a new law, the law involves transfer, delict, injury, crime, restoration, revolution and so on endlessly, since there is no absolute or perfect law.
The relations between the father and the son are shattered precisely by the penetration into the enigma (from the ancient Greek word αὐτὸ τὸ ἀνίγμα, αὐτὸ τὸ ἀνίγματος, which means puzzle, riddle, puzzling, mysterious, obscure and ungraspable speech, unsolvable case). Blind trust sees through the cognition of the secret and its placement/allocation in language, even as the most puzzling figure of speech (a grotesque, irony, allegory). One’s confidence in the father is shattered. Forever. Unquestioning trust has been replaced by anxiety. He who was once the embodiment of the sacral, terror mixed with respect and love, is suddenly desacralised. Perfection was a delusion. Love has been divided. The Son realises that he was neither the only one nor the dearest, nor the most important. The priority has shifted; the centre is elsewhere (God, career, vice, the ego). Abraham realises this the moment he decided who to sacrifice. Before that he could delude himself. Moriah is a symbol of the desacralisation of the father. Self-delusion, as a human secret par excellence, is being de-secretised and abolished.

He who is caught red-handed by the son, like Abraham, has nowhere to run. He had better, if there is anything good at all (another irony of language and its power to deal with nonsense), pretend that he has not heard the question and suppress the answer. He had better stay without comment. He had better hope that in time and thanks to human hope things will be forgotten one day as if they have never been. Thus, until the end of his days, the father would keep wishing that the ground had swallowed him up so that he would not have to remember.
The father will look away to hide his eyes, lest he should be seen. The eyes speak. The look betrays what the lips secrete. The father will avoid eye-to-eye conversations on the topics of temptation and sacrifice. The son can forgive him, but forgiveness will not deliver him from his own anxiety. Moriah will be, from the beginning to the end, humanity’s nightmare. Doubt will gnaw the father and his son: the father – because he will be afraid that he has been demystified by his son; the son because at some point he will want to find out the truth. Doubt will be a way of communication between the father and the son. Doubt as an existential and ontological uneasiness. Abraham’s nightmare is a nightmare of humanity. Cyclically, it awakes, becomes topical again, renewed. Unfortunately. The world would lose its identity if it gave up the Moriah nightmare. Literature is one of the media that actualise the Moriah secret.

Another kind of optics offers itself in the observation of the grotesque of temptation. The text of the Gospel contains the description of the tempted one’s anguish in the form of a story that is, at the same time, an interpretation of the situation and a quote of God’s, Abraham’s and Isaac’s statements. Moses, as the author of the Gospel, demystifies some aspects of the grotesque but respects the enigmatic as much as it is possible when relating, even in the form of sacralised speech. He is trying not to inflame Isaac’s sense of injury. The manner in which Moses delivers the story of Abraham does not institutionalise revenge as the identity of the son and, paradoxically enough, does not advocate punishment for the father and dethronement. It is a sign that the story of Abraham and Isaac has gone through a (Christian filter) and that it has been focalised well through the consciousness of the narrator. The subsequent incriminated events involving sacrifice are superficially treated in the scriptures of the Old Testament. There is no mention there of the
father’s sense of guilt and remorse or of Isaac’s trauma. Abraham and Isaac return with the two young men as if nothing unusual has happened. Precisely this unusual something that Abraham and Isaac will not discuss is the dark spot that needs to be brought to light. But, since the hermeneutics of this silence needs to be brought to light through the prism of another topos, forgiveness, we will leave it for another opportunity.

The Humanity Principle – the Nightmare of Humanity

In my poem ‘Temptation’, revisiting the grotesque of Abraham’s temptation, I asked: “Why He above spoke no word and why He saved his mercy – none has ever learnt!” I alluded to the position that humanity, especially its Macedonian portion, is in today. I asked Abraham, the Father, and God to refuse the sacrifice of one’s progeny/people as a proof on one’s loyalty. I said “refuse to sacrifice the dearest” but I am not sure that I put it well. Had Isaac been Abraham’s dearest in the true sense of the word, Abraham would not have decided to sacrifice his own son. He may have been fond of his son but God must have been dearer to him. At one point his system of ethical and emotional values changed. Then I asked – how many more iniquities in the name of ideas of good? How much longer will the end justify the means (and what END, actually)? How much longer will the policy of evil-good be promoted? How much longer will the almighty keep silent, the ubiquitous (he who sees all) and righteous?
Едно од основните прашања што го поставува херметичната и херменевтичката ситуација од Стариот завет во врска со искушувањето на Авраам и жртвувањето на Исак е токму прашањето - како да се живее човекчи, а да се биде верник? Како да се биде верник, а да се остане хуман? Дали некаде, во некои крајни граници, верата ја исключува хуманоста и на преден план ја поставува идејата, идеалот, начелото. Што и да одбере, Бог или Синот, човекот губи. Кога губи помалку? Човечката ситуација е бирање меѓу две зла. Но, како да се одреди кое е помалото зло? Може ли кое било зло да се претвори во нешто добро? Ја знае ли некој таа алхемија, таа магија?

Изборот на Авраам е познат. Тој одбира да си го усмрти синот, под форма на обредно присусување жртва пред и на Бога. Сеедно што Авраам de facto не го извршува убиството, тој суштински го прави својот избор. Авраам е свесен за тежината на својот избор, но сам го бира. Бог му налага, но тој е оној кој треба да одлучи што ќе направи. Авраам ја прифаќа опцијата на слепа верност. Тој знае дека изборот што го прави се коси со неговата претстава за татковство, но сепак одлучува да оди наспроти себе и да ризикува. Ризикот на Авраам веројатно се исплатеше. Бог демнеше над него и го спречи најлошото. Но што ќе беше ако Бог беше за миг отсутен? А за фактот дека Синот нема никогаш повеќе да биде целосно син, ретко кој се прашува. Исак е обележан, за веки- веков, од сомнежот во татковата љубов. Синот страда од недостаток на љубов, недостаток на верба, недостаток на поткрепа. Синот е дефинитивно сам. Од искушението на Авраам до денес, човекот е сам. Историјата цинично го потсетува човештвото дека е тенка границата меѓу Бог и Сотоната, меѓу таткото и гаволот.

One of the basic questions posed by the hermetic and hermeneutic situation in the Old Testament concerning Abraham’s temptation and the sacrifice of Isaac is precisely the question of why to live like a human being and be a believer? How to be a believer and remain human? Does faith, in some extreme instances, exclude humanity and put the idea, the ideologue and the principle in the foreground? Whatever one chooses, God or the Son, one loses. When is the loss smallest? Man is in a position to choose between two evils. But how does one decide which evil is smaller? Can any evil be turned into something good? Does anyone know that alchemy, that magic?

Abraham’s choice is well known. He chooses to put his son to death, under the guise of a ritual offering before and to God. Regardless of the fact that Abraham does not actually commit the murder, in essence he does make his choice. Abraham is aware of the graveness of his choice but he makes it anyway. Abraham accepts the option of blind loyalty. He knows that the choice he makes contradicts his perception of fatherhood, yet he decides to go against himself and to take the risk. Most likely Abraham’s risk paid off. God eyed him and prevented the worst. But what would have happened if God had been absent for a moment? And few people ask themselves about the fact that the Son will never be entirely a son. Isaac was marked for ever by his doubt in his father’s love. The son suffers from lack of love, faith and support. The son is definitely alone. Ever since Abrahams’ temptation, man has been alone. History has been cynically reminding humanity of the thin line between God and Satan, between the father and the devil.
God prevents the infanticide in the nick of time but that cannot cleanse Abraham’s conscience. An attempted murder is an act of treason of the meaning of existence, of the principle of humanity. If the meaning of being can be grasped despite the perceptions of humanity and of ethical principles, then humanity is not a prerequisite that man cannot live without. There are numerous examples that show how some individuals perceive existence through nonsensical, absurd, inhumane and unethical deeds. However flexible, the term ethicality as a possible synonym of humanity, it is still not endlessly flexible or absolutely entropic. Life sets the measure of humanity.

The absurd, ironic and grotesque acts, such as the sacrifice and murder of one’s dearest, or of the unknown, the murders motivated by nothing or the mysteriously motivated murders (from Abraham, though Medea, to Mersault from Camus’ *The Stranger* or to the narrator in Daniele del Giudice’s short story *Absolute Ear* [L’Oreille absolue]...), are full of primordial motives and feelings, such as revenge, envy, desire for sadistic pleasure, mindlessness.... Finding the meaning of existence (for the human to become humane) involves humanising every human being individually. It is almost an unfeasible project. Then, if the human *per se* is not humane, what is his *differentia specifica*? Gaining experience through other people’s examples is a precondition for profiling the concept of the humane. Dispelling the illusions. Idealising the human in order to humanise him.

Life rather than death plays tricks on man. Death is loyal, life betrays man. The paradoxical shifts lurk behind every corner of existence. Ethics is reconstructed
Identities

svijok na postoeñeto. Eтиката се реконструира преку соодносот (јазот и совпаѓањата) меѓу зборовите и делата. Етиката на живеењето не е наследна категорија, не е стекната еднаш за секогаш. Таа постојано се гради и се возобновува. А токму етиката е таа која ги формира претставите за другоста и за другиот. Етиката е подрачје на подвоености и разлики, некогаш непоимни и крајно неприфатливи. Затоа другиот постои и не може да се поистовети со мене и јас не сакам да се поистоветам ниту да ме поистоветат со него. Можеби не сосема и не секогаш, но етиките разлики се видливи и мерливи, зашто имаат човечки образ.

Sacralisation of Literature

Literary speech is secret. Logically, literary speech is a kind of sacralised speech (sacra, sacré – secret, holy). Literarisation is sacralisation. The desire not to say everything, the need to suppress some things is a feature of non-literary kinds of speech, particularly of contemporary colloquial speech, which is by far more open to being supplemented with non-linguistic instruments and with the extra-linguistic situation that it contextualises within and to which it gives informative power. The non-verbalised part of speech is a commonplace in natural linguistic systems and communications. Literature seeks to verbalise even that which it does not express. In literary statements, unexpressed words are constituent elements of the linguistic-rhetorical figures, narrative, dramatic and lyrical forms through which the semantic (and other) effects of a literary work are rendered. The conscious refusal to say some words and reveal some secret messages is a general feature of language. Literature specifies this feature and adjusts it to its linguistic and aesthetic code. Literature says much more but the way
Според Дерида, книжевноста е естетизирана форма на десакрализација на светотот откровение (Дерида, 1999, 205). Книжевноста се поставува како свидетел на еден мистериозен чин, некогаш на едно зло-дело кое копне по заборав. Но, уште светите писма/книги, колку и да се сакрализирани, подразбираат и некои книжевни својства. Оттаму, светите писма веќе ја најавуваат десакрализацијата, но и најавуваат нов, делумно естетизиран облик на енigmatизација, а со тоа и на сакрализација. Книжевноста не може сосема да се извлече од сенката на сакралното. Нејзината склоност кон енigmatичност и кон херметичност ја доближува до сакралното, макар како облик на мистификација на сакралното.

Како естетски облик на меморија која може да се ре-актуелизира во секоја соодветна констелација, властата гледа на книжевноста како на потенцијален противник. Постои стереотипизиран, признат или непризнат имид дека книжевноста може да ги загрози спокојот и статусот на восточните дискурси на моќта и на носителите на моќта, дека претставува закана по однос на официјализираната слика на светот, на историјата, на сегашноста. Оттаму во оштетствата, особено оние кои инклинираат кон тоталитарност, се јавува зazor од книжевноста. Книжевноста не може, и да сака, да го игнорира чита-

in which it does so is not banal. Even when it conceals, it does not do that explicitly or pragmatically. Whoever does not speak explicitly, has every right and duty to speak implicitly, figuratively, to lose touch with the reference object, to refer simultaneously to more objects, spaces and times.

According to Derrida, literature is an aestheticised form of the desacralisation of the holy revelation (Derrida, 1999, 205). Literature bears witness to a mysterious act, sometimes an evildoing that longs for oblivion. But the holy scriptures/books, however sacralised, still involve some literary features. Hence, the holy scriptures already herald not only desacralisation but also a new and partially aestheticised form of enigmatisation and, thereby, of sacralisation. Literature cannot come entirely out of the shade of the sacral. Its tendency to be enigmatic and hermetic brings it closer to the sacral, even as a form of a mystification of the sacral.

Being an aesthetic form of memory that can be re-actualised in every appropriate constellation, literature is perceived by the authorities as a potential opponent. There is a stereotyped, recognised and unrecognised image that literature can threaten the tranquillity and the status of the established discourses of power and the holders of power, that it is a threat to the canonised image of the world, of history and the present. Therefore, in societies, particularly in those inclined to totalitarianism, there is an aversion to literature. Literature cannot, even if it wanted to ignore the reader and be indifferent to the throne and to tyranny (a final paronomasia).
At the end of his book *To Give Death*, Derrida summarises the four features of literature that are significant to hermeneutics. First, says he, literature is entitled to say everything and to conceal everything. Second, literature is free from the responsibility to make sense (sense, not meaning!) and a clear object of reference (referent). Third, literature can be absurd like Abraham’s sacrifice. Literature is entitled to refuse to say something – that is, to be hermetic, to be absolutely hermetic. Fourth, the secret of literature does not have to correspond to any reality in the world and to any established meaning. Fifth, literature is a place of all secrets without a secret. The supreme law of literature is the singularity of the event, the work (Derrida, 1999, 206). These theses designate Jacques Derrida as a thinker who defends the autotelism and autonomy of literature, its right and duty to aesthetic freedom, choice and play, and, precisely because of this, its predestination to be mysterious. Literature, understood as desacralisation of the secret or as sacralisation of history, cannot be absolutely hermetic. What literature, being relatively hermetic, says cannot be an absolute nothing. Literature says a lot, speaking mysteriously, always anew. Literature outlives death. Faced with the many temptations, to be or not to be, literature survives. Who protects it is another open question. But if it does not protect itself, even God will not be able to help it.

Translated from Macedonian by Ognen Cemerski
Белешки:


2. Во врска со транскрипцијата на името Аврам треба да се каже следното. Во преводот на Стариой завет на македонски јазик, се користи формата Аврам. На Аврам, според заветот што со него го направил Господ, како татко на многу народи, Господ му го сменил името од Аврам во Авраам или Авра’ам. Господ се заветил (се заколнал) дека ќе го размножи и дека ќе му овозможи да опстане за веки веков, а Аврам се заколнал дека ќе го слави како единствен Бог. Символ и доказ на тој завет би требало да биде обезувањето на машките деца (било да се родени, вели, или да се купени за пари, глава 17 од Книгата Моисеева). Бидејќи искушенето се случува откако Бог му го сменил името, во овој текст ќе ја користиме формата Авраам.

3. Тоа место каде што Авраам требало да си го уби синот, е наречено, според зборовите од неговиот одговор, (брдо на коешто) Господ ќе се йогрижи.

Notes:

1. К. Кулавкова, Мевусвей, (Скопје: Три, 2000). (English quotation taken from the King James Version of the Bible, the First Book of Moses: Commonly Called Genesis; tr. note.)

2. It is worth saying something concerning the transcription of the name Abram. The form Abram (Avram) is used in the Macedonian translation of the earlier lines of the Old Testament. According to the covenant between God and Abram, who fathered many peoples, God changed his name from Abram to Abraham or Abra’am. God swore to multiply him and thus enable him to be for ever and ever. In return, Abram swore to worship Him as the only God. The symbol and proof of that covenant is the circumcision of male children (“he that is born in the house,” he says, “or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed”; Gen. 17:12). Since he was tempted after God had changed his name, I use the form Abraham in this text.

3. The place where Abraham was supposed to kill his own son was named after his answer, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

4. David Wills translated the title into English as The Gift of Death but the author of this text explores various Macedonian verb and noun forms that cannot be readily translated into English and therefore seem somewhat unnatural. Bestowing Death, a variant I use several lines below to translate the Macedonian gerund that Kulavkova challenges, is closest to Wills’s choice. tr.note.

5. Hermes is a winged messenger of the gods, inventor of the lyre, escort of the souls in the nether world...
5. За тоа зборуваат митовите за Уран, Хрон, и Јупитер, преданијата за многу историски личности, на поинаков начин и трагедијата на Софокле, Крали Оидип, која го прикажува, меѓу другото, замисленото убиство на Еди и затврнатото убиство на Лай...

6. This is the subject of the myths about Uranus, Cronus and Jupiter, the stories of many historical characters, and in a different way the tragedy by Sophocles, *King Oedipus*, which, among other things, shows Oedipus's imaginary murder and the confinement of Laius...

Библиографија:


References: