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## Metaphor and Interpretation

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Literary Studies in Poland 20, 69-87

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1988

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## Metaphor and Interpretation

Interpretation can be viewed as a reaction to the metaphorical nature of poetic idiom. Metaphor and interpretation are two terms referring to one and the same communication process, indicating one possible variant of literary ingenuity (metaphor) and one possible kind of reading (interpretation). Observe that routine literary activities, such as publishers' advertising, book reviews, educational broadcasts etc., usually involve the notion of "great metaphor," this as a rule implying more than just style but something close to a self-contained composition exercise. Once you say about a literary work that it is a great metaphor (of the crisis of civilization, corruption of power, or man's confinement by nature), you direct a reader's attention towards implicit meanings, meanings which are accessible only in a "roundabout" way. Metaphor itself then may look like the ultimate goal of the artist's work, and, on the other hand, the final purpose of all interpretative endeavors seems to be the shedding of all metaphor. These customary practices of the literary world may admittedly be supported with arguments supplied by specialized doctrines. The theory of tropes and the theory of metaphors have displayed numerous (mutual) dependences. Moreover, in their classifications they rely on the same criteria and they refer to the same ideas about the nature of literary communication.

Once we have become aware of the ways in which metaphor and interpretation illuminate each other, we are bound to notice that the dialogue between the literary community and the reading public unfolds according to one of two models. On the one side a model of literary communication establishes itself which I propose

to call the intralinguistic model; just why I propose this designation—which is a borrowing from the theory of translation—will be explained further on in this essay. At this stage let me just point out that the intralinguistic concept enables us to use one and the same language when speaking on metaphor and interpretation alike, or, more broadly, on the art of using words viewed from two angles simultaneously—in the author's perspective and in the reader's perspective. The other side of the assumed dichotomy can be called the bilingualistic model of literary communication. The bilingualistic concept, just like the intralinguistic one, embraces as much the coding as the re-coding of artistic communications, and thus also offers one language for reflections on metaphor and interpretation, which of course makes it the opposite of norms and standards set by the intralinguistic model.

The argument behind the definition of the metaphor-interpretation relationship—in the former, intralinguistic, approach—goes more or less like this. Metaphor begins where literalness ends. Much the same is true of interpretation. A metaphorical expression is a coded text communicating a message which is hidden to the system of meanings established in a given language's vocabulary. This view of metaphor is expounded by ancient authorities on rhetoric and by some modern theories alike. According to Quintilian,<sup>1</sup> a trope leads a reader to a word substituted with another word; the former word must be guessed, because the latter word, in the given syntactical context, is used in a surprising, "improper," meaning. "I saw a man, who used fire to glue copper to a man"—this puzzling image is studied by Aristotle<sup>2</sup> (he means the medical technique of cupping), who concludes that metaphors speak in riddles while riddles are well-concocted metaphors. Twentieth-century theories (not all, though) also tend to explain metaphor as the going beyond the established platform of literal expression; briefly, as "speaking of *X* as if it was *Y*."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, München 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. Sometimes translations of this metaphor speak about bronze and about fastening bronze to flesh or welding bronze together with flesh using fire. The image remains the same essentially.

<sup>3</sup> W. Nowotny, "Metaphor," transl. by I. Sieradzki, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1971, fasc. 4, p. 221.

Anna Wierzbicka<sup>4</sup> at first notices "elliptic metaphors" in which "one of two elements is not mentioned explicitly," but she promptly notices that actually "all metaphors are by definition elliptic, for a metaphor which is completely explained away cannot be called metaphor at all." Accordingly, full or partial ellipticity turns out to be one of the universal properties of metaphor, in keeping with ancient canons of rhetoric.

Now, what is interpretation? It is a reaction to codes of literary art; a tearing down of masks; an exposition of subtextual communications. It is a solving of riddles. Analyzing in this perspective the very pertinent definition of interpretation as "a hypothetical hidden whole,"<sup>5</sup> I would like to put emphasis on the word "hidden." An interpreter's movements are as if anticipated in the scenario of the metaphor, with the order of interpretation apparently a repeat of the metaphorical expression but in the reverse order. Interpretation can thus be said to be metaphor in reverse.

The intralinguistic aspect of coding and re-coding literary communications is articulated most strongly in substitution theory. Substitution (of one word for another in a text) is the simplest case of intralinguistic translation. This translation is not confined to substitution alone; it is a "re-phrasing" or "interpretation of linguistic signs by means of other signs from the same language,"<sup>6</sup> which means it is sometimes a paraphrase and takes advantage of all privileges of paraphrase. Substitution is an ideal, then, in the same way as that often-cited adequacy or truth of translation from a foreign language. Paraphrase, in turn, is part of our real behavior as interpreters, much in the way those "betrayals" (adaptions, substitutions of analogous words) are which a translator continually finds himself forced to commit in his work. It can therefore be said that in the intralinguistic model there are—and determine one another—other concepts of trope and rules on how to unravel them (even though

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<sup>4</sup> A. Wierzbicka, "Porównanie — gradacja, metafora" (Comparison, Gradation, Metaphor), *ibidem*, p. 144f.

<sup>5</sup> J. Sławiński, *Dzieło. Język. Tradycja* (Text. Language. Tradition), Warszawa 1974, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> R. Jakobson, "Językowe aspekty tłumaczenia" (Linguistic Aspects of Translation), transl. by Z. Sroczyńska, [in:] *Przekład artystyczny. O sztuce tłumaczenia*, Wrocław 1975, p. 110.

researchers have long used to draw a distinction between these two).

What the many different theories have in common is their persistent conviction that to explore the nature of metaphor we have got to take into account (at least) two aspects of its work. A single isolated word cannot be a metaphor.<sup>7</sup> There are many terms pointing at this dual or two-faced nature of metaphor in various ways. Notions usually go in pairs. Tenor and vehicle, external and internal form, focus and frame, thema and phora, the compared and the comparing elements.<sup>8</sup> But students of the problem disagree as to where, in which situations, this duality should be sought above all. We can choose either vertical links (between what is uttered explicitly and what is guessed) or horizontal links (between two things both of which are uttered, or else between two implicit messages organized beneath the surface of the given text). There is no agreement on the semiotic aspect of the sign which becomes a metaphor as its duality takes shape. Metaphor is generally taken to be a semantic phenomenon, and so the "duality" of a trope is a semantic kind of duality.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, metaphor is referred to the sign's syntactical or pragmatic aspects. Such a reorientation of the research perspective is sometimes viewed as a source of new knowledge about tropes. "Metaphor" also has a connotation pertaining to "pragmatics" rather than "semantics," and it is probably this connotation which deserves closest attention, says Black.<sup>10</sup> Research going in the pragmatic direction<sup>11</sup> finds itself facing—once again—the dual nature of metaphor. Metaphor's effect on the reader is sometimes described as a "dual vision" of the object it refers to, or, even

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<sup>7</sup> This view is propounded by M. I. Lekontseva, "Lingvisticheski aspekt metafory i struktura semanticheskogo komponenta," [in:] *Tekst. Język. Poetyka*, ed. by M. R. Mayenowa, Wrocław 1978, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> See M. R. Mayenowa, *Poetyka teoretyczna (The Theoretical Poetics)*, Wrocław 1979, pp. 216–250; M. Polakov, *Voprosy poetiki i khudozhestvennoi semantiki*, Moskva 1978, pp. 136–154.

<sup>9</sup> Y. T. Cherkasova, "Próba lingwistycznej interpretacji tropów" (A Tentative Linguistic Interpretation of Tropes), transl. by S. Amsterdamski, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1971, fasc. 3, p. 268, refers to V. Vinogradov and J. Kuryłowicz to prop her argument.

<sup>10</sup> M. Black, *Models and Metaphors*, Ithaca, N. Y., 1962 (Chapter "Metaphor").

<sup>11</sup> J. Japola, "Metafora: poszukiwanie nowego aspektu" (Metaphor: Looking for a New Aspect), *Studia Semantyczne*, vol. 8, 1978, p. 196.

more broadly, as "a doubling of the world."<sup>12</sup> Eventually, the idea about metaphor's essentially dual nature, voiced as it is so frequently and in many different references, neutralizes differences between various critical approaches to the subject.

The variety of meanings of metaphor's "duality" is mirrored by the variety of interpretative directives which are to open the reader's eyes to a "dual vision" of the text. Endless series of dichotomies purporting to encompass the entire work call on the reader to use his imagination to rip open the verbal fabric in order to pit its two aspects against each other; viewed from this angle, the history of literary consciousness can be described as the history of continually repeated endeavors to dissect the object of interpretation—substance versus form, fiction versus truth, narrative versus plot, rhythm versus image... But the energies dissecting the verbal fabric tend to exhaust themselves gradually, while the distinctions turn out to be unclear or unwanted. As unclear, they become constellations of specific notions; as unwanted, they give way to new dualisms such as the subject of creative action and the virtual recipient, language and metalanguage, time and space, coherence and incoherence, immanent and formulated poetics, metaphor and metonymy. This is the grammar of interpretation. It does not explain itself automatically, for it is being used by various mutually opposed cultural axiologies which require such and no other dissection of the text, and they do have their reasons for that, yet none of that invalidates anyone's right to study these processes in the grammatical aspect alone. Once again, then, it has to be noted that the grammar of metaphor is mirrored in the grammar of interpretation in the reverse order.

Let us look at yet another feature of the trope we are interested in. Researchers who view tropes either as subjective evaluations of the object, or as new patterns of the word's semantic substance, or as new configurations of elementary semantic units,<sup>13</sup> unfold in various

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<sup>12</sup> This effect of "dual vision" is a specific feature of metaphor, according to S. Ullmann; quoted after Nowotny, *op. cit.*, p. 225. For "doubling the world" in metaphor see Y. Levin, *Struktura russkoi metafory*, Tartu 1965, p. 293.

<sup>13</sup> The subjective view of the described object is being given much prominence in his discussion of metaphor by L. I. Timofeiev, *Osnovy teorii literatury*, Moskva 1963, p. 203f. Ch. Perelman says: "each phore [...] imparts a different structure to the theme, exposing some of its aspects and leaving other ones in

ways what is basically always the same idea about metaphor being axiologically oriented towards being a trick. Metaphor is the trick of reshuffling the sign's hierarchy; it is something like a subversive action against customary modes of utterance. Metaphor abolishes the word's commonly accepted hierarchical semantic structure and postulates a desire to set up a new pattern of the word's internal relationships (even if only for a single utterance). In this aspect, too, metaphor appears out to be a negative of the model of interpretative ventures. Unlike a scholarly description, unlike literary analysis, interpretation is oriented towards the text's intrinsic hierarchy. It fulfils its job only when it presents the hypothesis about the text in its entirety as a hypothesis about relationships between most important elements which govern this entirety as distinct from second-rate or unimportant elements. An interpreter wants to know what is governed by what in a work's composition, what is the subordinating and what the subordinated energy, and which components play a marginal part in the quest for the work's all-embracing sense.

For a third time, I find myself forced to say at this place that interpretation situates a work within the pattern of the metaphor (regardless of whether it involves the lavish use of ornamental elements or represents an extremely ascetic style devoid of any tropes at all).

The three distinctive features of metaphor I have pointed out here—ellipticity, duality and hierarchy—are not mutually exclusive nor do they invalidate one another. Metaphor as a riddle organizes a "dual vision" of the poetic reality; in rifting the vision it ends up revising our images as they are established in words. This sequence of implications can be regarded as self-consistent if we agree that it is based upon a certain organizing idea, namely that about the translatability of metaphors, and, at the same time, the idea about interpretation as intralinguistic translation.

The intralinguistic model of literary communication, then, is based upon the following assumptions:

There is only one semantic system within any given verbal culture

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the shadow" ("Analogie et métaphore en science, poésie et philosophie." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 1969, no. 87). Lekontseva (*op. cit.*, p. 157) studies metaphor as a configuration of different semai.

and only one set of norms of interpretation of linguistic utterances. According to de Saussure,<sup>14</sup> *langue* is a self-regulating entity, an institution we neither want nor are able to overthrow, for it relies on tradition and so needs no rational justification of its arbitrariness, and an institution which is present virtually "in every mind" where it decides that man understands himself, understands others, and can be understood by others.

If de Saussure is right, then literary communication amounts either to actual degradation, that is, to an endorsement of nonsemanticity (in which case it will churn out nonsensical messages), or to ostensible degradation (a mock rebellion; a revolution which intends to surrender to counter-revolution right from the beginning).

Intralinguistic manipulations go in one of two directions, namely towards literalness or away from it. At the heart of the model there is literalness; beyond its boundaries there are gibberish, paranoid speech and thus something which can be called non-speech, a demonstration of non-language. Two possibilities are faced then: literal text and non-literal text, which can be "moved back" to literal expressions which exist after their transformation in it, text which can be "decomposed" into primary non-metaphorical expressions. There is a third possibility, namely text which sheds its metaphorical character once we recognize it as a fable,<sup>15</sup> but this is just a variant of the same order of things. Something which is not a metaphor (nor nonsense) can only be a materialization of literalness set in rules governing fables—anonymous and ancient as speech itself. No other parameters exist. There are no other languages, there are just events of the same language; intralinguistic translation either differentiates the oddity of those events (in art) or restores their semantic identity (in interpretation).

This system has been repeatedly criticized, and always for the same reason, namely for its totalitarian character, in defense of the individual's right to unhampered self-realization. As a rule, however, mutually opposite concepts of literary art (demands made by hermetic

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<sup>14</sup> See F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris 1955.

<sup>15</sup> See the very interesting essay by T. Dobrzyńska, "Metafora w baśni" (Metaphor in Fable), [in:] *Semiotyka i struktura tekstu*, ed. by M. R. Mayenowa, Wrocław 1973.



lyrical poetry, pure poetry, irrational speech, surrealist productions, poetry as “language within language” etc.) stemming from splits taking place in different currents of the interpretation school (from Russian formalism to certain ramifications of modern structuralism). The joint mutually contrasted presentation of the two parallel currents of intralinguistic thinking adopted in this essay validates their description as semiotic ideology which is governed by the pragmatic criterion of truth. History knows intentions and expectations, styles of creation and styles of reception geared to the intralinguistic nature of literary communication and defining its own responsibilities within the boundaries of intralingualism. This ideology—for it is nothing but an ideology—has no universal significance nor can it ever have that. It comes across facts which instantly suspend its powers between normative value and incoherence. When this ideology attempts to save itself by defying the facts, it slips into normativism. When it does respect facts which go beyond it, this ideology becomes incoherent.

A. *Normativism*. That metaphors often resist the intralinguistic system, that some of them are insoluble or perfidiously tangled, has been known ever since the system’s inception. Also, ever since the system’s inception we have been in the face of the poetic imagination’s rebellious character. Olf theories of tropes could afford to describe a deviation from intralinguistic rules just as a “bad metaphor.” Aristotle thought “Kaliopē’s cry” was a bad metaphor.<sup>16</sup> He said the point of it all was poetry, and as poetry is sounds and the cry is a sound, the analogy does exist. However, the analogy is wrong, for it brings up a third-rate feature of poetry (its accoustic aspect) thereby making it quite difficult to decipher the hidden word. Surely there is no point in wondering what Aristotle would have to say in his *Rhetoric* about an expression like “this silken-voiced hymn above sugar-sweet cruelty.” Twentieth-century theories are pervaded by a hidden kind of normativism, which is camouflaged either by their specific pick of examples—in their telling avoidance of any more involved configurations of poetic language—or by attempts to distinguish between objective and subjective approaches in research. The rule, “I study texts as a researcher: I appraise them as a poetry fan.”

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<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *op. cit.*

is actually a defensive kind of phraseology, for a buff's feelings are in this case a straightforward result of methodological calculations.

Says one researcher who writes as one, "Metaphor nowadays spans so widely disparate meanings that a reader may be entirely unable to grasp those analogies. As Karol Irzykowski once put it, it looks as though authors are keen on setting puzzles to their readers while keeping the clues without which the puzzles cannot be resolved for themselves."<sup>17</sup>

Analogies, puzzles, riddles, clues— all these terms, borrowed as they are from the vocabulary of intralinguistic theory, are represented in their purest form here.

But the same researcher speaking as a poetry fan says, "I would like to see a kind of poetry which is loyal towards the language, the most magnificent instrument of culture. Language, like all social phenomena, is a system of accepted, recognized and commonly held norms and standards. [...] Anyone who ignores norms and the indigenous status of words unavoidably becomes isolated and solitary in his poetic endeavours."

The researcher as reader thus finds support for his taste in the same, equally outspoken, intralinguistic literary axiology. It is a case of one language, one status of words, one universality of requirements and norms of social communication. Anything that slips the system's ordering rules of unity in diversity is wrong.

B. *Incoherence*. Intralingualism's incoherence becomes evident in studies which, as an aside, mention the possibility of inexplicable metaphors in a context of the adopted theory. When Yuri Levin speaks of "subjective metaphor," which refers the reader to the given poet's own productions and the given epoch's own poetics rather than to the system of commonly accepted norms, or when Margarita Lekomtseva mentions "halos" of metaphorical expressions which

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<sup>17</sup> A. Hutnikiewicz, *Portrety i szkice literackie (Literary Portraits and Essays)*, Warszawa 1976, p. 248. Author emphasizes the passage from the role of expert to that of amateur. "This is where the role of a moderately objective historian of literature ends, because historians must not demand or anticipate anything but only describe and explain the present state of things. But demand and anticipation are all right with ordinary recipients and amateurs of art" (p. 252).

themselves can communicate things (things which cannot be communicated in any other manner<sup>18</sup>)—the intralinguistic model no longer works. The system comes across alien phenomena, unidentified semiotic objects which, within the framework of intralinguistic ideology, are “extra-systemic” and “illegitimate.” The overcharge of the conceptual system can be seen from what is called interaction theory of tropes. It can work as the final word of intralingualism and, at the same time, as an introduction to bilingualism.

The bilingualistic model, a rival of the above-discussed model of literary communication, is also a product of semiotic ideology. This means the bilingualistic model, too, leads to abuses—not, as before, reductions, but attempts to proliferate art in “abundance,” which may not have been intended by the writer nor desired by the recipient. The implicit assumption of this theory is that a user of a verbal sign is a one-language individual (within the given culture of the given ethnic language) as long as he or she dispenses with literature. The moment literature enters his life—whether as production or as consumption—such an individual becomes “bilingual.” The distinction of the Polish language into non-poetic and poetic languages creates a specific kind of “bilingualism.” This does not rule out the possibility of intralinguistic action, that is, the rewording of poetry into non-poetry or vice versa; similarly, a bilingual person, i.e. one who knows two languages, can translate both ways. But such rewordings turn out to be second-rate exercises, too cumbersome in some cases or unproductive in others. Independence of thought is the goal in either system, and the better you get to know both the one and the other the more closely aware do you become of the basic differences between the two underlying ideologies. Bilingualism can be perfected by preventing interferences. If I want to think and speak in Czech as fluently as in Polish, I have on each occasion to be right in the centre of the one or the other system. Similarly, when I want to comprehend colloquial and poetic speech with equal clarity, I must constantly be tuned to the specific properties of each of the two, that is to say, I must constantly try not so much to obliterate the differences between them but to bring them to daylight.

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<sup>18</sup> Y. Levin, *Russkaia metafora: sintez, semantika, transformatsia*, Tartu 1969, p. 301; Lekomtseva, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

Poetic language is "the second Polish language" in so far as familiarity with its non-poetic codes does not suffice to understand poetry written in Polish.

What does metaphor become in this model then? Metaphor picks up where simile ends. Simile pertains to non-literary language, but in literature it becomes an elementary particle of a new literalness.

Poetry is—yes — literal. Although poetic language sometimes is the opposite of literalness, it communicates real messages, not illusions or who-knows-whats; poetry, then, communicates truths—literal ones. Those truths in true poetry are discoveries, the way truths are discovered in scientific research, but they concern not so much general physical laws as individualized, varying, truths of inner life [...] Poetry discovers and divulges psychological, aesthetic, moral truths, [...] above all truths which cannot be classed with categories known so far.<sup>19</sup>

"Metaphor" itself becomes problematical as a term here. It is either a homonym or an anachronism. Some authors, including Yuri Lotman, impart to it a meaning which goes beyond the scope of meaning of tropes. In their argument, metaphor is one of two basic determinants of poetic language; rhythm being the other one; with rhythm determining the paradigmatic, metaphor the syntagmatic, aspects, respectively, of a literary utterance. It offers no room for any countable series of structures of articulation. In modern lyrical poetry, in particular, "two words standing one by another may constitute a metaphor."<sup>20</sup> Others give up the term "metaphor" altogether.<sup>21</sup> Suppose in bilingual ideology metaphor is "metaphor" in quotation marks, denoting a certain process, a quest for an autonomous second language. "Metaphor" tries to fit itself to all possible meanings of an utterance in non-poetic language which sounds the same. Metaphor looks like nonsense. It resembles a fable. It pretends to be simile. These are all metaphor's potentials; metaphor takes advantage of their expressive energy but never identifies itself

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<sup>19</sup> J. Przyboś, *Zapiski bez daty. Szkice i notatki (Undated Notes and Essays)*, Warszawa 1970.

<sup>20</sup> Y. Lotman, *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta*, Moskva 1970, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> J. Faryno moves in the same direction; in his opinion, every individual poetic language is a system which models our vision of the reality as though "from nothing." In such an approach, the categories of "metaphor" or "trick" lose their sense. See Faryno's essays: "O języku poetyckim" (On Poetic Language), *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1972, fasc. 2; "Nekotoryie voprosy teorii poeticheskogo yazyka," [in:] *Semiotyka i struktura tekstu*.

with them. Its meaning unfolds amidst the new literalness of poetic language.

The news about a man who tried to fasten a piece of copper to another man's body using fire for the purpose—when it is considered as a metaphor in a bilingual system—does not have just one model framework. It has three hypothetical framework: 1) It is nonsense; nobody uses fire to attach metal to flesh. 2) It is not nonsense, it is fable; in fables, flesh can be refractory, fire can exist in liquid form, and metal can have the properties of fabric or paper. 3) It is not fable, it is a simile. The poet speaks of gluing metal to flesh, but he actually means cupping.

Reception may grind to a halt at any point in that process. Each stop may make the recipient reject the metaphor. ("Tuberculosis sclerotized his nerves," said Stanisław Grochowiak, but Antoni Słonimski protested, "Tuberculosis never sclerotizes nerves."<sup>22</sup>) But the containment of metaphor within the boundaries of nonsense does not have to induce anyone to reject it. Nonsense can delight as a joke, as an exposure of mindless colloquial habits etc. When metaphor is contained within the boundaries of fable or simile, largely similar alternatives emerge. Full reception occurs only in the fourth, at last, stage of reasoning, when we tell ourselves: this is neither simile nor fable nor nonsense, this is truth. The truth of a new, poetic, literalness.

The message studied here (involving men, copper, fire) discloses the laws the artist's imagination imposes upon the reality. It is a world of men and things, of things and elements tending towards one another, desirous of union; their union is supposed to save the characters involved in the drama, but it turns out to violate the nature of each of them and to end up in cruelty. This explication is borne out by all the rejected hypotheses. By that about nonsense, because the world's absurdity is being communicated. By that about fable, because it speaks about trespassing upon nature. By that about simile, because the implicit intentions of covenant and salvation are guessed in it. The simile must be discovered, but it has eventually to be opposed (it is you who see cupping where I see a man gluing a piece of copper on to flesh). The ultimate end is not what is hidden.

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<sup>22</sup> A. Słonimski, *Jedna strona medalu (One Face of the Coin)*, Warszawa 1971, p. 541.

but what is uttered. The literalness of the second language (secondary literalness) is the true carrier of poetic language (the text's orientation to itself); in substitution theory, metaphor is a negation of poetic character, for it favors something that does not exist in the text's substance. Acknowledgment of the new literalness moreover implies abandonment of the "dual vision." This one supreme truth of the poetic message is being seen clearly. And so, metaphor's hierarchical character is also invalidated. There are no secondary elements in it, as everything serves the projection of the new language, and thus everything becomes necessarily creation (this is how Przyboś interpreted the meaning of masterpiece).

In the bilingual perspective, poetic language is "language" in quotation marks. It is not a complete system but a process tending to establish itself as a system. While the intralinguistic model favoured metaphors isolated from concrete communication situations, the bilingual model is doing the opposite thing—it can check its own identifications only against concrete features of literary messages, that is, the authors, the currents, the epoch. The greater the number of variants of a given metaphor the bilingual model knows, the more assured it is that the process transforms itself into a system. This is true in particular when the same word is used alternately as the object of metaphor and as the factor which imparts metaphorical meaning to the object; when the repeated reversals of the comparison disarm that structure from inside: the comparison no longer refers to the commonplaces<sup>23</sup> of non-poetic language, but it becomes meaningful when cast against the backdrop of the poet's own mythology. As a result, the simile ceases to be "merely a comparison," and turns out to be a worn-down and discarded phrase.

Here is an example, the word "rose" in Stanisław Grochowiak's "Underessing to Go to Bed",<sup>24</sup>

A czy ta róża  
Może w nich  
Je pytam

[But is the rose / Perhaps in them / I ask them]

<sup>23</sup> On the role of the "system of associated commonplaces" in the process of comprehending a metaphor see Black, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> S. Grochowiak, *Rozbieranie do snu*, Warszawa 1959.

This poem gives no chance to divorce the meanings of "rose" from its commonplace denotation. The interpreter here must content himself with the observation that "rose" is "a sign of joy of life," "a symbol of life."<sup>25</sup> It is only in other poems in the same collection that more light is cast on the peculiar meanings of the word "rose." Thus, the rose stands for the interior of the living body, a body turned inside out, penetrated, slit up, and, in that flagrant shamelessness of biology, that interior appears to be the same for plants, beasts and men:

Jak bladzi ci ludzie z pierwszych płócien Picassa  
Delikatna różowość kurzego żołądka  
Jest to kwiat odwiecznie ponętny i twardy  
Róża

[Hor wan those people in Picasso's early canvasses / The faint pink of the chicken stomach / It is an ever alluring and tough flower / The rose]

In yet another poem there is a similar image of pinkness (always a metonymy of the rose) as transparency of the body:

Ogrodnik tu różowy — przejrzysty jak pęcherz  
I widać jak przez krwiobieg  
Widno mu przepływa  
Należny tylko niebu  
Sprężony gaz  
Powietrze

[The gardener here is pink—transparent like a bladder / And you can see his blood system / Being pervaded / By compressed gas / Which the sky only deserves / Air]

In its shamelessness as an opened-up body, the rose is a frivolous flower, which is aggressive towards dead bodies. "A fork without you is an ugly extravagance of metal / But in your hand—it is sexy." The rose is aggressive all the time. It is the movement of air, a disturbance of space, an array of erotic phantasies, of all-too—familiar *fin-de-siècle* symbols:

Postawiłem wazon róż — i od razu się zakotłowało  
Wolter w błękitnym fraku Marysienka w nagościach  
Różowego powietrza było wokół tyle  
Że co tchnąłem swobodniej  
Sfruwały motyle

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<sup>25</sup> J. Maciejewski, "Stanisław Grochowiak: *Rozbieranie do snu*," [in:] *Czytamy wiersze*, Warszawa 1970, p. 342f.

[I put a vase of roses there, and promptly there was a motion / Voltaire in  
a blue gown Queen Maisie in her bareness / Pink air was so abundant all around /  
/ That as I breathed freely / Butterflies jumped up]

The rose, then, is greater than it is. It is greater by the landscapes it kindles in space. "A cow without you is just a four-legged mountain / With you it's a baby." The poet is true to himself. The absence of a rose signifies hollowness, a dead world, an ugliness of the extravagances of civilization. "There is a certain dryness of form in our garden Maybe / That's why there is a stump where there was a rose." He is adamant in developing a mythology of the rose:

Różo Odnawiam cię różo  
Czym byłaby poezja jeżeli nie wstydem  
Gdyby szwadron tumanów  
Połknął cię na zawsze

[Rose I revive you rose / What would poetry be if not embarrassment / If a squadron of fools / Swallowed you for ever]

The rose is not so much a sign of life as a sign of art in which life can be depicted from inside, from inside the body. It is all like the pink figures in Picasso's paintings. The more literal an interpretation we adopt for these semblances, the better we understand the meaning of asking about the rose in the poem "Undressing to Go to Bed." And also we will be able to understand more easily there is no answer to the question in the poet's conversation with the Death.

Interpretation in the world of bilingualism is not a reversal of metaphor but its extension. The literary text is regarded as the "trigger" of the interpreter's language. The grammar of metaphor becomes something like a generative grammar for interpretation. It is all as it was once demanded by Boris Eichenbaum,<sup>26</sup> namely literary research seeks to be a set of conclusions from its exploratory journey across literary texts' specific features. In the definition of interpretation as "a hypothesis of a hidden whole" the emphasis is put on the "whole," the "hiddenness" referring to the entire literary historical context within which semantic solutions are being sought. No wonder then that the interpreter scrutinizes the poet's metalin-

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<sup>26</sup> B. Eichenbaum, *Szkice o prozie i poezji* (Essays on Prose and Poetry), transl. by I. Pszczołowska, R. Zimand, Warszawa 1973, p. 275.



guistic explications (such as Grochowiak's apostrophe to the rose). Lotman's interpretation of *Eugene Onegin* unfolds in a space delimited by comments on the work which are interspersed throughout the text. The point of that is to take note carefully of whatever is being said so that the understanding of the text should reaffirm the unity of coding and recoding. At the same time, the literalness of the text under interpretation leads to a distinction of the text's substance in its unique configurations (rhythm, instrumentation, lexicological, phraseological etc.). The link-up of the sign to the substance determines its aesthetic dimension,<sup>27</sup> and so metaphor and interpretation run in the same direction, along the *via estetica*. While intra-linguistic ideology pushes the aesthetics of literature out into a remote periphery, bilingualistic ideology makes the aesthetics of literature one of its central problems.

One more point: bilingualist interpretation needs not amount to poetizing about poetry. The interpreter's language in that case extends the poetic language (and hence the literary communication process) not so much by emulating the style as by the repudiation—analogously to what poetry does—of what has become petrified, anonymous and commonplace in culture. It is that analogy which implies the sovereignty of the idiom of literary research; that idiom must remain sovereign against verbal culture's uniformity in the name of its intrinsic plurality.

The theory of metaphor may develop regardless of the theory of interpretation, but that of the theory of metaphor which survives in literary consciousness is determined by the interpretative custom of the time. What of the ancient doctrine of tropes has survived in postwar Polish literary awareness? Less than what of ancient sculptures and paintings has survived in museums. Textbooks, ranging from Descriptive Poetics through to Applied Poetics, must be veritable descriptions of the situation if in chapters dealing with tropes they display more similarities than differences. You always come across the same things—several notions which superimpose one on another, share parts of their meanings and defy all standards of systematic classification, even standards such as symmetry of opposition tricks.

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<sup>27</sup> I unfold this view at length in "Estetyka: czwarta część semiologii" (Aesthetics: the Fourth Part of Semiology), *Teksty*, 1979, no. 2.

Textbooks as a rule mention hyperbole, but not litotes. They discuss at length animation or personification, while paying no attention to metaphor, which objectivizes life (reification? anti-prosopopeia?) although that is one of the four rules of trope, according to Quintilian. Tutors conducting exercises in poetics usually get a jolt as teachers when they have to proceed from a promise to unveil a system of literary art to the vestiges of the ancient doctrine of tropes which can be anything but a foundation of any systematic approach towards literature.

What of modern literary theories has made its way into interpretation? Hardly anything. Patterns provided by logical semantics dissolve in a first encounter with actual literary texts. Triangles, polygonal figures, metalinguistic frameworks — all these go down in the flows of verse created by people like Leśmian, Czechowicz, Baczyński or Szymborska...

How does the view about the mutual attraction of metaphor and interpretation tally with the undeniable truth about tentative classifications of metaphor being defied by prevailing customs of interpretative practices? The theory of metaphor seeks to put in order the chaos we have inherited from antiquity (or did more recent vicissitudes of literary theory bring about that chaos?). It tries to set up clean-cut patterns of classification presupposing a one-to-one correspondence between each pattern and each mechanism. The classification of variants of metaphor should not permit the possibility of including the same metaphorical expression in several different patterns. From the angle of interpretation, the patterns turn out to be records of the process of reception, reaffirmations of theorists' own idiosyncrasies as readers. One and the same metaphorical expression can ultimately be linked up with countless many theoretical patterns.

Take the example of the metaphor, "the light will die in the river."<sup>28</sup>

A. In substitution theory, this metaphor can be explained in the following way: the poet says "die" but means "go out" (the riddle is actually simple, for in Polish we say the same words about human life which ends).

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<sup>28</sup> From S. Flukowski's poem "Słońce w kieracie" (The Harnessed Sun) from a collection under the same title. Warszawa 1929. p. 55.

B. In the metaphorical triangle according to Jerzy Pelc,<sup>29</sup> the nonmetaphorical expression "a man will die" and the nonmetaphorical expression "the light is going out" drop the words "man" and "go out" while the remaining two words constitute the metaphorical expression "the light will go out."

C. Semantic explication according to Anna Wierzbicka.<sup>30</sup> The light will go out in the river – (I am thinking of the reflexes in the river) – you would say it is not the light, but a human being, that is going to die.

D. Wierzbicka provides one pattern for metaphor and another for simile. But the studied text could also be fitted into the pattern for simile. If it is expanded into an explicit statement: "The light will die in the river [like a man]," we obtain the following series: the light will die in the river = perhaps that could mean a man's death. ("Explications cannot be proved but only disproved," says Wierzbicka.)

E. According to Ivor Armstrong Richards.<sup>31</sup> The meaning of this metaphor is determined not so much by the similarity of appearances (of the sinking and the corpse) but the same attitude taken towards the tenor and the vehicle. Dying is the worst that can happen to man—going out is the worst that can happen to light.

F. In the theory of "current metaphor" according to Andrzej Bogusławski,<sup>32</sup> the reasoning would go in the following manner: the exact meaning behind the word "will die" is not known; maybe it means "will go out," maybe "change colour" or "break" (dissipate in the water) or "become frozen" or something else. Thus we will say the light in the river will become something different from what it is in air, and it is this inexpressible quality, which cannot be articulated unless through a metaphor, that is the point here above all.

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<sup>29</sup> See J. Pelc, "Zastosowanie funkcji semantycznych do analizy pojęcia metafory" (Applying Semantic Functions to the Study of the Notion of Metaphor), [in:] *Problemy teorii literatury*, ed. by H. Markiewicz, Wrocław 1967.

<sup>30</sup> Wierzbicka, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> See R. Wellek, A. Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Harmondsworth 1963.

<sup>32</sup> A. Bogusławski, "O metaforze" (On Metaphor), *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1971, fasc. 4.

G. In interaction theory.<sup>33</sup> This is not an abbreviated simile but a semantic transformation. The bewildering juxtapositions of words determine their new semantic configurations. "Light" becomes the name of an element the main feature of which turns out to be its being "mortal." The "river" ("water"), in turn, is a "lethal" element (as well as a burial site). Lastly, "dying" refers not only to living creatures, as the dictionary wants it, but also to elements, as the metaphor implies.

H. I the instrumental approach suggested by Boris Uspenski,<sup>34</sup> the poetic information is contained in the game of acoustic similarities of the words "will die" and "in the river" in Polish, and in the emancipation of two syllables in them (*umrze* and *w rzece*, respectively). The poetry imparts autonomous meaning to fragments of the words which are exposed owing to instrumentation. In this specific case, the fragment *w rze* may suggest the word *wrzenie* (teeming) of light in the furious waves; if so, this suggestion would not be at odds with visual experiences and, at the same time, it would be in opposition towards substitutive interpretation ("to die," that is, "to go out").

Let us stop here. If we went on with the above series, we would come across the mechanism of the game between nonsense, fable, metaphor and truth of poetic literalness. All these and similar scenarios are conceivable in the space of real poetics of reception. They all are subordinated to semiotic ideologies which control the reality of reception. Interpretation cannot break away from ideological constraints on its own character. Its meeting with metaphor and with theories of metaphor is therefore conceivable only in the space of its own self-definition and is determined by the history of literary communication.

Transl. by Zygmunt Nierada

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<sup>33</sup> See Black, *op. cit.* The interaction theory is discussed in an interesting way by J. Paszek, *Stylistyka. Przewodnik metodyczny (Theory of Style. A Guide)*, Katowice 1974, pp. 96–113.

<sup>34</sup> See B. A. Uspenski, "Grammaticheskaja pravilnost i poeticheskaja metafora." [in:] *Tezisy dokladov chetvertei letnei shkoly po vtorichnym modeliruiushchim sistemam*, Tartu 1970.