

A SYNCRETIC INTERPRETATION OF THE POEM “PRINCE MARKO’S CHURCH” BY BLAŽE KONESKI



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Abstract. Interpretative syncretism, as a coalition of critical methods (a trans-method), combines selected elements of several paradigms: poetic, stylistic, linguistic, cultural, mythical, historical, psychological, philosophical, and hermeneutical. It is not an ambitious synthesis, nor pure eclecticism, but rather an act of creative freedom. The following reading of the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” by the Macedonian poet Blaže Koneski (1921–1993) could be seen as an optional pattern of syncretic interpretation because of several reasons: the poem has dramatic and liturgical structure suitable to express both personal and collective memory; its narrativity is intertextually linked to the Macedonian historical and folk legend of King (or Prince) Marko (“Krale Marko”); the very act of understanding the poem is an act of therapy; its associations are linked to the biblical narrative of the “Weeping of Rachel”; it evokes a lot of ethical dilemmas concerning death and God, sin and forgiveness, confession and catharsis and, ultimately, the very sense of creation, i.e. the creation of good and evil. This is the ambivalent phenomenon coexisting in synchronicity. The Macedonian language even has a specific word uniting these antithetic meanings – “evilgood” (zlobodro). The *economy of evil* demystifies the genesis of the biggest human trauma and stigma: doing evil under the pretext of good. “Evilgood” is not only a cultural legacy, but also reality. To sacrifice the Other is not only a mythical image, but an “eternal present”. To interpret a poem sometimes means to look for the sense of absurdity.

Keywords: interpretative syncretism, hermeneutical cycle, coalition of methods, biblical intertext, economy of evil, evil-good, participation mystique, poetry therapy, Blaže Koneski.

O interpretare sincretică a poeziei „Biserica prințului Marko” de Blaže Koneski

Rezumat. Sincretismul interpretativ, ca o coaliție de metode critice (o trans-metodă), combină elemente ale mai multor paradigme: poetică, stilistică, lingvistică, culturală, mitică, istorică, psihologică, filosofică și hermeneutică. Nu este o sinteză ambițioasă, nici eclecticism pur, ci mai degrabă un act de creativitate liberă. Respectiva interpretare a poeziei „Biserica prințului Marko”, semnată de poetul macedonean Blaže Koneski (1921–1993), ar putea fi văzută ca un model opțional de interpretare sincretică din mai multe motive: poemul a are o structură dramatică și liturgică adecvată pentru a exprima atât memoria personală, cât și cea colectivă; narativitatea sa este legată intertextual de legenda istorică și populară macedoneană a regelui (sau prințului) Marko („Krale Marko”); însuși actul de a înțelege poezia este un act de terapie; asocierile sale sunt legate de narațiunea biblică „Plânsul Rahelei”; evocă o mulțime de dileme etice cu privire la moarte și Dumnezeu, păcat și iertare, confesiune și *catharsis* și, în cele din urmă, însuși simțul creației, adică crearea binelui și a răului. Acesta este fenomenul ambivalent ce coexistă în sincronism. În limba macedoneană chiar există un cuvânt specific care unește aceste semnificații antitetice – „Evilgood” („zlobodro”). *Economia răului* demistifică geneza celor mai mari traume și stigmatizări umane: a face rău sub pretextul binelui. „Evilgood” nu este doar o moștenire culturală, ci și realitate. A-l sacrifica pe Celălalt nu este doar o imagine mitică, ci un „prezent etern”. A interpreta o poezie uneori înseamnă a căuta sensul absurdului.

Keywords: sincretism interpretativ, ciclul hermeneutic, coaliție de metode, intertext biblic, economie a răului, *Evilgood*, participarea mistică, terapia poeziei, Blaže Koneski.

Introduction

The aim of this introduction is to give some theoretical reminiscences about poetry. The poetic code is able to integrate the historical, social, cultural, metaphysical, performative, cathartic and therapeutic functions. Poetic speech contains characteristics of an enigmatic, intuitive, prophetic, ritualistic, cathartic, mystical and magical 'speech act'. As a result, poetry is an excellent opportunity for the specific application of syncretic interpretation that requires a coalition of several interpretative paradigms. It is particularly suitable for the assimilation of unconscious psychic contents, of those 'passions of the soul' that are the same for all people, no matter how different their speech and alphabet, the ones Aristotle speaks of in his hermeneutic essay *Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας* [1], as early as the 4th century B.C. Poetry reflects the universal patterns through local mythical images. Taking into consideration that "archetypal patterns are included with a unique fullness in poetry, one may say that poetry makes a considerable contribution to religion, psychology and philosophy" [2, p. 243].

Some poems have the power to initiate certain psychical and mystical correlations with the "reflective reader" [2, p. 334]. The poems that include a collective experience are a powerful initiating act that moves the awareness of the reader and his/her imaginary world, changing the accepted moral, religious and psychological frames (taboos, stereotypes). The act of creation and reception of a poem is a ritual act of individuation [3], an act of integrating the fragmented pieces of oneself. Those poems that support the ritual/performance of individuation are suggestive, ceremonial and effective. Such poems are susceptible to psychotherapy or, rather, with their help *poetry therapy* (one form of the treatment known as bibliotherapy), highly popular in recent years, is performed. Poetry therapy is conducted by reading and writing such types of poems and related literary and near-literary forms (confession, epistle, dream, memoir). Therefore, we could, in that sense, speak of a specific literary genre whose dominant trait is

the ritualistic, psychological, cathartic and therapeutic one [5, p. 287-308].

Explication of the Text

As the shortest kind of hermeneutics, explication of a text (*explication du texte*) is a written or oral presentation of a text. To explicate a text means to adopt the basic elements that give meaning to it, on the level of expression and on the level of contents. An explication of a text does not contain the giving of comments, judgements or feelings. It argues while interpreting, pointing to appropriate examples, be they external (author biography, genre, epoch, writing opus) or internal (segments of the text itself). Explication is an aid primarily aimed towards the reader with the purpose to inspire, relieve or direct his/her intention and it includes several components in its composition or plan of interpretation: introduction, development and conclusion. It sometimes follows the text sequentially, word by word, part by part, and other times it focuses on two or three main parts, depending on the text itself.

The introduction is short and arranged after the entire text is completed. The exposition or development of the explication should be logical and composed according to the theme or the arrangement of the text, and all this should be well-supported and precisely quoted (signals, text markers). Also of importance are the conjunctions and other cohesive devices, as well as the coordination among paragraphs of the explication, in order for the reader to be able to follow the continuity of the argumentation and the conclusions. Quotations should be short and illustrative of the given argument. The conclusion provides a resume and a synthesis, therefore making it uncommon to repeat previously stated statements in this part.

"Prince Marko's Church" in the Context of the Poem "The Fortress"

In Blaže Koneski's (1921–1993) cycle of poems about Macedonian King Marko ("Prince Marko's Church", "The Fortress", "Sterna", "The Hill of the Dog", "The Breaking of Strength"), as

well as in several others that gravitate towards that cycle (“Howl // A Cry”, “Sick Doytchin”, “The Angel in St. Sophia”, “Icon”) contents from the Macedonian oral folklore are projected [6]. It is precisely the folk traditions, myths, legends, poems and even mythical images (personified in archetypal structures) that have the power to project the collective memory and be a medium connecting the collective unconscious, language and literature. The poetry of Koneski is rich in exemplifications of the Shadow archetype, actualized in the form of evilgood that is tightly linked to the Hero, and the Anima archetypes (actualized in the Mother, Woman, Sister).

All the poems from the Prince Marko cycle are based on one of the themes sung about in the folklore and announced by a motto-quote from a folk legend (intertextually). The two poems, namely, “The Fortress” and “Prince Marko’s Church” are particularly similar because they focus on the heritage of Prince Marko in the form of buildings (a fortress/support, a church). Both chronologically, as well as logically, the building of the fortress comes before the building of the church. The 70 churches are built by Marko as a testament for the redemption of the sin (hubris, evilgood) committed during the building of the stone fortress in Varosh (Prilep, Macedonia) when 70 innocent children (babies in diapers) died of hunger, thirst and heat.

The motto of the poem *The Fortress* says: “When he was building the fortress in Varosh, Marko collected a huge labour force, men and women, young and old. From Pletvar to Varosh they passed the stones from hand to hand. Seventy babies died in their cradles for lack of suckling.”

The motto of the poem *Prince Marko’s Church* says: “For his sins, for the seventy children that died when he was building the fortress, Prince Marko built seventy churches.”

The poem “The Fortress” is autonomous but can also be read as an introduction or a doublet to the poem “Prince Marko’s Church”. It introduces the theme of evil, sin and the nightmarish guilty conscience that also serves as an introduction into the raising awareness of

evilgood and giving an oath to build a new good that will be stronger than the committed evil. The poem poses the question – why do people, and especially great people and leaders, commit evil by defending themselves against evil? Why is good an introduction to evil, and evil a prerequisite of good? The universality of evilgood (doing evil in the name of good and as a resistance against evil) does not liberate the conscience of the individual, nor the collective conscience, from the guilt, the agony of self-blame and the memories. Marko realizes too late that “there was another justice” apart from his own [7], that “everything evens out in life/in the influx of good and evil”, that the Fortress (as a deposit for the good of the community) is powerless against the “inevitable advance of evil” (as a systemic constant of the human civilization, as well as the very being of the World, thus as an immanent cosmic principle). At one point, he says that even if he wanted to, he would not be able to change the course of history and would build the fortress again as a defense of the people against evil, so he would again sacrifice the children and go through the *ritual of sacrifice* which is the foundation of every culture [9; 10].

In the poem “Prince Marko’s Church”, however, the focus is on the church and, through it, on the motif of forgiveness and the redemption of sin. Sin is in its essence not transferable and it is thus immanently personal, making the trauma personal as well as the punishment. The poem poses the question of whether it is possible to right the great wrongs/sins by building monuments, by new sacrifices, through suffering and spiritual growth. This poem culminates in the drama of conscience and the internal conflict of the Ego with the unconscious. Prince Marko is simultaneously faced with his own and the general contradiction of humankind. The paradoxical order of the world is reflected upon the personal order. Finally, Prince Marko is the parable of the personal entity of the poet and should be read as a historical projection of an individual drama. The mythical image of Prince Marko has the semantic capacity to reflect the condition in which the lyric sub-

ject finds himself. It is a matter of transferring adopted images and meanings from legend and myth onto the current lyric subject (even onto the author of the lyric statement). Mythical images alleviate the decoding of the current enigmas of existence, be they individual or collective. Self-understanding as an initiation into the understanding of the world is a mechanism that enables the integration of both the repressed and unconscious contents in the consciousness of the subject. Understanding is half the forgiveness of the sin and soothes the guilty conscience, ultimately even inspiring good deeds.

To hear oneself and understand oneself means to accept oneself by making peace with the baggage of unconscious instincts, shadows, sinful/ forbidden thoughts, traumatic memories, and mysteries. It means to wake up the poet in oneself, his metaphorical, ironic, oneiric and mythical images, his paradoxes and oxymorons, his unconscious memory pulsating in the rhythm of a recently born consciousness, of a recently found speech, which is a world par excellence. For the world is reflected in speech and the poetic world in the poem. "All reflexive thinking is singing, and all poetry is thinking." [11, p. 248] We live in the language, but the essence of the language is not linguistic [12, p. 33]. That's why the word is saving the world [12, p. 111].

Composition

The composition of the poem "Prince Marko's Church" consists of a narrative and confessional continuity that can be reconstructed into seven points. Each of the seven segments is both independent as well as inseparable from the whole of the poem. Each of the segments (formal and semantic) is rounded up with a suggestive image, partially in the form of a narrative statement, partially as a lyric-dramatic performative:

- The cold semidarkness of the church is presented as a parable of the "mourning soul" (thus multiplying the theme of identity).
- The saints warn the subject not to enter the church.
- Despite the prohibition, the subject enters the church. The urge to enter the church,

i.e. one's "soul", the world of the unconscious, is stronger than the danger; the subject is ready to "meet himself right then and there". Here we notice a deliberate ambiguity, by introducing the mysterious phrase "right then and there", which suggests that self-recognition must take place immediately, or finally, once, as an act delayed for years.

- A ritualistic image is given of children "with palm-branches in their hands", an image that is yet to be clarified.

- A "woman's lament" is heard, of Rachel, "wailing her grief to the world".

- In the final fragment of the poem defeatism culminates – the futility of any attempt to redeem a sin, for there is no longer a spark in the hearth of the heart, as the fugitive "shall bear the church to [his] grave".

The title of the poem "Prince Marko's Church" gravitates towards this compositional framework, as it traces a semantic, as well as a cultural and historical diagonal, which encompasses the three motifs of sin, death and God, in one whole.

Narrativity

The narrativity of the poem "Prince Marko's Church" stems from the prototext of the folk legend of Prince Marko that serves as an inspiration to Koneski. The motto of the poem points to its semantic key, posting the three most important topoi in the poem: *sin, death, God*.

(1) *Sin* seen in the sacrifice of innocent children as a result of the construction of the Fortress is an actualization of the Shadow archetype.

(2) *Mortality* of man. No one has ever saved himself from *death*, but some die as innocent victims and others with a guilty and sinful conscience, and they do not rest in peace for which they must go through the ritual of purification.

(3) *God* is the ultimate Cosmic Consciousness that has the power to bring peace to one's soul if it is shared by the person dissociated from the shadow of the committed sin and the guilty conscience (which is the gravest punishment). God is the moral law. The moral law stands on

the very boundary between the conscious and unconscious, between vanity and trauma, between good and evil. Some (ambiguous) acts cannot be comprehended unless we face the moral law and look for God in ourselves. Not having a conscience is the other side of a guilty conscience, a source of evil and a shelter for evil. Justice is the Achilles' heel of humankind, for it is neither simple nor given in advance, as there are many different justices, just like truth, which is a mirage and not a given. The language of poetry is the language of understanding that helps us understand ambiguous acts, our own and those of others [12, p. 239-268]. The poem is the very moment when man faces moral judgement and names his fate. Once named (acknowledged) the fate becomes bearable, and evil need not be repeated.

The narrative descriptions in this poem are poetically structured, with a *unique rhythm that culminates in a dramatic manner*. The segments of the story are inseparable from the whole of the poem. In accordance with the dramatic rhythm, they intensify through repetitions (polysyndeton), but are linked in a manner characteristic of catharsis as an act that signifies not just liberation and purification from the powerful passions but includes an aspect of bringing the unconscious to the light of consciousness (a vision). What is unusual about it is that it is defeatist, solipsistic, it offers no liberating forgiveness, but an acceptance of fate, acceptance of the fact that one must live with the dark church for the rest of one's life (consciousness illuminates sin, but does not provide an amnesty for the conscience).

The narrative framework of the poem is filled with an *intimate monologue* (the 'I' form) that includes from time to time a reference to someone else (the destroyers, the saints, the believers), which emphasizes the dramatic character of confessional narration and intonation. This dramatic charge makes the poem readable as a 'ballad', even more so because the dramatic conflict has a tragic intonation and the dramatic character faces a tragic ending and self-sacrifice.

Characteristic for the "prophetic rhythm" of the poem "Prince Marko's Church" is the

illusion of a narration that it leaves with the reader. Its hermeneutic code is connected to the story with the help of which one can decode its enigma [13, p. 233]. This poem has ingrained in it, as a sacrifice in the foundation of the fortress, a story with an intimate intonation. The narrativity of the poem suggests the presence of the legend of the building of the Fortress, hence a "story within a story", and behind that legend, one can see the myth, until one arrives to the realms of the sacrifice archetype.

This *archetype of sacrifice* is actualized multiple times in the oral narratives of the Balkan people and it always points to the necessity and ritualistic nature of sacrifice when building bridges and fortresses, as an investment into the survival or the identity of the collective (Skadar, Vishegrad, Skopje, Vidin, Belgrade). The building of the Fortress (a monument to culture and a monument of the builder) incurs the building of 70 churches, the building of the churches incurs other sufferings, the new sufferings incur new sacrifices, new human drama and drama of humankind. To atone for the sin committed during the building of the Fortress, Prince Marko built 70 churches, one for each child that died. Such is the meaning of the testaments to culture and history. Such is the history of the culture of leaving a monumental trace behind oneself. The culture of sacrifice. The culture of justifying and making sense of evil. A ritual of committing evil under the pretense that it is done for the good of the people, always in the name of God.

The Archetype of Evilgood

In all the poems of the Prince Marko cycle, Koneski actualizes, very specifically, the motif of evil from the point of view of one of its paradoxical forms/existence, known among the Macedonian people as 'evilgood', when the doing of good includes evil or when the good does not exclude evil (hence the saying "all evil is for good" as a philosophical reminiscence of the hope that evil is a contribution for something good to happen and that great good deeds are not innocent and devoid of a dark side). Legends point to a

primordial link between good and evil, between the great idea to build a fortress to prevent the invasion of evil/the enemy, and the need to sacrifice the people to achieve that goal.

The tradition of evilgood is established as a higher, metaphysical and religious logic. The history of sin/hubris is the history of humankind. Evilgood is a powerful archetype that is actualized time and again in history as if it is vital for its existence. In that sense, one can say that the *history of humankind is a history of evilgood*. Evilgood is the epitome of survival. The constitutive principle of Good is Evil. That is the antinomy of history and humankind that repeats itself for otherwise the entire history of humankind would be annulled.

The ethical dimension is absent from the archaic, *primordial and mythic consciousness*, marked by the sensory experience in the world (visual, auditory, tactile, erotic). It forms later, in relation to the religious worldview, especially under the influence of monotheism. Namely, ethics stems from cognition/existence and not from immanence/essence of deities, the god-like creatures/creations and man. Polytheism is based on the awareness that the God of Evil and the God of Good are two sides of the same image of the world, two functions of the same identity, profane and sacred, solar and animistic.

Looking at Prince Marko from this perspective, *he is a parable of evilgood*. However, he, as any other ethicized and epically sung about character of a hero, is more often idealized than he is parodied. Sung about in the folklore, Prince Marko adjusts to the epic system of conventions. Prince Marko, as many other people of greatness who have indebted history and directed its course, is a representative of evilgood.

The poet's imagination, fed by the intimate experience, demystifies the man of greatness precisely from the point of view of the personal experiment of evilgood. *Sacrifice is transformed from an unconscious to a conscious act and, then, to a ritual with a cultural dimension*. Hence, the analogy between the two characters initiates the *process of individuation* through the conscious bringing to awareness of the interconnected-

ness of good and evil, often in an unsolvable conflict that serves as an introduction into the personal and collective tragedies.

The Principle of Transformation

The first thought when communicating with the poem "Prince Marko's Church" is that it *has a great dramatic, cathartic and psychagogic capacity* [14]. The impact of the poem is so great that *we share*, together with the imaginary lyric subject, the attack of the primordial images projected onto associative, religious and culturally recognizable visions of church artefacts (frescoes). The impact of the poem is so great, that we feel the elemental force of the unconscious in which the personal reminiscences are intertwined with the collective ones. We sense that were it not for the support from the collective memory (coded in the symbols of the Bible, the frescoes, the legends and history), people would get lost in the elemental force of the unconscious. We sense that, after the initial impact of the force, a light can be seen, a way out, but it can only be reached if we agree to transform.

It is a radical transformation in the plutonian sense of the word. It is a transformation through loss, suffering, death, as a pre-requisite to experience rebirth. Transformation is the price of salvation from the mindlessness that leads to an inner conflict with the unconscious and the repressed feelings of guilt and sin, the dark memories and urges, the ignoring of the truth that does not suit us, the underestimation of others' existence, the underestimation of the danger great deeds carry with them, the danger and the contradictory nature of the super-human efforts that demand personal and collective sacrifices.

In the case of "Prince Marko's Church", the lyric subject, the poet and the reader are all encouraged to face the need for a thorough, internal transformation because of two factors: first, from the cognitive (cultural) shock from the immanent "unity" of the good and evil in the archetype of evilgood that is cyclically actualized in history and, second, from the stylistic and rhetorical indications given in the poem it-

self. The stylistic and linguistic character of the poem, namely, are manifested to an ample degree to enable us to see in it what is also latent, hidden and mysterious. The poem is a system of expressed and hidden signs, stated clearly enough to provide us with an orientation in space and hidden enough to lead us on a quest.

Thus, not all is clear as it may appear at first glance, when we are absorbed by the dramatic and scenic quality of the poetic performance. The poem establishes an “associative rhetorical process, largely below the threshold of consciousness”, a “prophetic rhythm” emphasized by the rhetoric of the paronomastic harness of sound and meaning, with an enigmatic meaning [15, p. 307], as if it is a matter of discovering a dangerous secret, forbidden to tell.

Participation Mystique and Confessionalism

The poem “Prince Marko’s Church” has a confessional hue and can be viewed as *a rite of intimate confession*. The confession initiates the act of catharsis through identification with historical personages, co-entities, artefacts and legends. The confession is two-fold: on the one hand, it is a mystification of a confession (of the mythological and historical figure of Prince Marko) and, on the other, a personal confession of the poet. The confessions of both subjects coincide and are integrated in the poem. There is a transfer of the subject and his expression. Namely, in no instance is there a strict line of division between the imaginary and legendary lyric subject and the poet’s *I*. This ambiguity suggests a *slippery, fluid, double identity* of the narrating subject. The ambiguity of the narrating subject is also reflected on the relationship between the object and the subject of the poem (so much so that Prince Marko can be observed as part of the ‘object’ of the poem, as its backside!), thus leading to an interpretation of it as an indication of the ritualistic nature of the poem and what is called “participation mystique” [16; 4, p. 145-172; 17, p. 128-129; 18; 19].

As a reminder, Jung’s term “mystical participation” (taken from anthropology and

primitive psychology) suggests the mystical relationship between the subject and the object, resulting in a mysticism of the identity that is established between them. We are going to widen the meaning of this term by the identification that the three subjects in the poem make one with another, discreetly and implicitly (the imaginary lyric subject, the real subject of the poet and the reflected mythological and historical subject of Prince Marko) [20]. In “Prince Marko’s Church” the identities of several subjects are exchanged with a layered object of evocation (the identical nature of the church and the soul, the lyric subject and Rachel). Ultimately, the introduction of mystical participation into play stimulates the *performative act* of internal transformation of the subject and his identity. The poem itself suggests a belated act of becoming aware/transforming of the lyric subject, but hope for the reader as well, for he will be able to elevate the intimate experience of the poem and its performative nature or ceremoniousness and dramaticity, on the plane of initiation into one’s own, personal awakening.

The presence of the I-form in the poem is explicitly emphasized, thus suggesting a creative awareness of that process of ambiguous personality and a mutual transfer between the identity of the lyric subject and the lyric object. This discrete doubling of identity, in essence, evokes subtly the idea that history repeats itself, and that in paradigmatic situations as the building of the fortress and in characters like Prince Marko, many of our contemporaries, including the poet, would recognize themselves. Thereby, the identity of evil and good is integrated into an *evil-good* and evokes the prototype of the primordial God in whom black and white, dark and light are not yet separated (Black-God, White-God).

Actually, what is at play is a unilateral triangle marked by the role of the lyric subject, the lyric object and the poet. We immediately realize that the poem’s world is sensitive to the personal unconscious of the poet and it is a legitimate projection of the personal in the collective unconscious. Thus, an easier communication with the reader is established, and the

reader becomes part of that metaphysical scenic space where the act of individuation takes place. This act is reflected in the integration of the poet's Shadow within his personality [21]. It reflects the rite of integration characteristic for the historical figure of Prince Marko with his lyrical projection in the poem "Prince Marko's Church". This integration is captured in the paradoxical myth when the reversed, inverted side of his super-heroism is presented, of his idealized and glorified heroic acts, revealing them as more evil than good and deserving of as much glory as curse.

The Poem as an Act of Performance

The poem, in that sense, performs a discreet ceremonial influence (an archaic magic function) on the very edges of esthetic figures and functions and it sets a paradigmatic image of transformation, a Mandala of integration and of individuation. It is a potently articulated meditation over the paradoxical essence of existing and being (of existence and essence), and this is the reason it is powerful, and experienced as a ritual of purification from the excesses of the unconscious, as a light that shows the Way, perhaps the way out of some critical or dramatic situation.

The tragic hubris leads to human and inter-human conditions that are not sustainable, that demand a denouement, that take no compromise and for which there is no half-way solution. If the compromise is taken out, the final effect will remain, the extreme performance, the fatal ending, the solipsism, fatalism and the inevitable punishment. This poem is not melodramatic, but tragically hued, marked by the *tragic metaphysical qualities*, a difficult poem, an ominous poem, filled with hallucinogenic scenes, a poem echoing the Christian and particularly the Orthodox Christian moral code. Once again, what is fore-fronted is the impression that the world IS ruled by the principle of evilgood's "vicious circle".

The realization that there is no forgiveness is an initiation into accepting the punishment for the committed sin, not only as a logical, but as a desired order of events. The subject faces

a nightmare, feeling that he is losing his mind and "arched into a dome" carrying within himself the "cold void of the church". The first line "I built a church in a hidden place..." gains full meaning with the last line stating "I carry the church to my grave".

The narrative description of the entrance to the church turns into a performance of self-realization, a parable of facing one's own, personal unconscious, filled with repressed urges, feelings and images. It is, at the same time, a coming to terms with the Shadow, but not an abstract and distant Shadow, not the universal prototype of the Shadow, but one's own, personal and personified Shadow. The performance of the Shadow is an initiation into the Truth that presupposed a different Justice, a different system of virtues, a different vision of heroism. The mask (the Persona) inevitably comes off and the other, demystified face of the subject becomes visible (Prince Marko, the poet, the reader).

The entrance to the church "St. Dimitrija" [22] or, rather, the look at the frescoes (mural paintings as a text) unlocks the hidden masked face of the imaginary Marko, partly historic, partly mythological, partly intimate (auto fictional projection of the poet). Upon first crossing the threshold, one can sense the ominous silence and the heavy cold of the church, placed low beneath the ground, like the unconscious. In this hidden, subterranean, chthonic space in the twilight of the inner space (soul, essence) even the silence is "dark" and eerie. Two saints, on either side of the entrance, forewarn "Marko" not to enter deep inside, but alas, it is too late, there is no turning back, the circle must be completed, and the time is right for bringing the unconscious to consciousness and for transformation to take place:

- The walls start moving;
- The vague silhouettes from the frescoes come down in reality and approach Marko "silent, threatening / Faces, hideously suffering / Dark warriors.../ Mourners at a death bed, / Bodies pierced by spears, at the point of death / Writhing in final agony / children lost in the crowd / With palm-branches in their hands."

- A multitude of silent apparitions and ghosts tie Marko “into a knot after knot of nightmare (...) expecting something” from him.

- Not completely aware of what is happening, Marko talks to the apparitions, asking to start a dialogue: “Speak!” – I said”, but they keep on being silent and he remains “alone with my guilt”.

In this fight with the apparitions, Marko hopes for help from the ultimate Power and thus goes in front of the altar to pray. In that very moment the most shocking, dramatic and ritualistic revelation of the Apparition reflected in the church frescoes happens. This drama of enlightening the dark side of consciousness is carried out through a synesthetic rhetoric: the paintings cry, the frescoes scream in despair. At that moment, Marko sees the image of Rachel with her hands held high as she cries “over the dead youngsters, mourning in the universe”. This is the Orthodox and Byzantine pictorial version of Rachel surrounded by the dead children, but not those from several hundred years ago, not those from the primordial times, but those here in his consciousness, in his life.

What becomes evident is that a personification of the Anima archetype has taken place in the character of Rachel and that the Shadow has a face, cheek, voice, power. The interior of the church is a representation of the being and the soul of the poet. The soul opens up and starts confessing, telling, warning, punishing. The living word, as an embodied language, is ceremonial. Each blessing is preceded by a sin. Even hero sin. Sinlessness is fiction. Evilgood is the archetypal structure of the Shadow and it generates history. The world of the dead is a world, nonetheless. The invisible does exist. God is in multiple places at the same time. God is here. An epiphany takes place (revelation is the Christian synonym of bringing the unconscious to consciousness). Is a salvation in the here-and-now possible?

The Cry of Rachel (Biblical Intertext and Ecphrasis)

One of the frescoes in the church “St. Dimitrij” shows “The Cry of Rachel”. The Biblical Ra-

chel is the prototype of the Mother who dies/expires on the delivering bed, as she gives birth to the twins Joseph and Benjamin [23]. This fresco evokes the Biblical motif of *the sacrificial murder of the first-born children* by Pontius Pilate, in order to execute God’s son – Jesus Christ. The poem evokes the cultural and religious ritual of God worship. The fresco of the cry of Rachel – becoming and ecphrasis and an intertext in Koneski’s poem – has the dimensions of a primordial image of the “wailing her grief to the world” of every Mother whose children have been killed in the name of the higher Christian “common good”. Rachel, from the Mother who dies for her offspring and a Woman who dies to become a Mother, transforms into an image of the Anima of the lyric subject. Rachel is the double projection of the personal and the collective unconscious. She is the embodiment of the Anima archetype and the Great Mother, a personification of the ultimate consciousness-and-conscience. The archetype of the Mother, Woman and Anima are united (integrated) in one, so they can point the path towards individuation.

This path includes the crossing from one to another moral law, from one to another ideal, from one to another God. There is no virginal establishing of God. The personification of God is not indifferent, because it is not unique. The world has a completely different attitude towards the Higher Power, that includes various interpretations, different theosophies and different rituals. As one moves away from the prototype of the Higher Power, one faces the risk to be biased towards one’s own personification of God. The bias creates a series of other passions, some conflicting. The division between My and Your God begins. The narrative of religious identities, their genesis, their survival, begins.

The surge of primordial images, interpreted through the Christian prism (tradition), continues. It is no longer a matter of earthly wailing over a human sin, but a cosmic mourning for the Heavenly principle, for a higher ethics, from a superior Judgement that no one can ever evade, not Prince Marko, nor the martyrs-victims. It is a matter of the sacrificial foundation

of culture [9], it is about a culture that is not possible without sacrifice. It is about a world in which things are intertwined and not black-and-white, God is not just Good and Evil is not so godless. The paradox of Evil-Good.

The Shadow and Anima Archetypes

The Anima is the image of the woman in the psyche of man (and the Animus is the image of the man in the psyche of the woman). As transpersonal psychic structure, it is beyond strict social and moral dualism and antinomies, such as the antinomy of masculine vs. feminine, good vs. evil. As a heritage of collective unconscious, it gets its “conscious” connotation in the collective social context full of restrictive gender and moral dualisms. When repressed, the Anima causes fear, dramatic personal conflicts and stigmatizations.

The Shadow is part of the dark contents of the mind and its Persona, the masked image the subject has built for presentation before the world and himself. The Shadow becomes dangerous territory of man and his psyche, as long as he refuses to face the fact that the world is a paradoxical whole of good and evil, of light and darkness, and that the boundary between good and evil is discrete and delicate, and can be repressed in the deep shadows of the unconscious.

The Anima signals its presence in verbal and dream images, in some art and literary works. In the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” by Koneski there is a shocking conflict between the unconscious principles of the Shadow and the Anima. In this poem, the lyric subject (by its confessional intonation) sings of the meeting with the Shadow, the flash of the unconscious in the consciousness, the reflection of the collective Shadow in the personal and even the personal Shadow in the collective memory (legend, myth). The poem suggests the idea that history repeats itself by law, as evil repeats itself, and that evil is the instigator of history, even more so because the world and the consciousness (civilization) refuse to face its essence. Evil is a constant, particularly destructive in times of its violent repression, when it is not properly chan-

neled and when it comes out forcefully, unexpectedly, fueled for a longer period of time with negative passions, hatred, feelings of injustice and endangerment.

The facing with Rachel is cathartic. While reading the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” one feels, personally and irreplaceably, the condition of *shared enlightenment* among the poet, the lyric subject, his myth-historical projection in the character of Prince Marko and the reader. The poem, namely, witnesses the performance/drama of the mystical experience of the descent of the human into the divine, and the sacred into the human (god man, godly man, godly woman, integrated Heaven, Hell and resurrection) and the integration of the image of the Anima in the image of the Man.

The imaginary subject of the poem in which the author’s person is projected, wishes to save himself from the Shadow, running “crazed from the church” but faces the “cold emptiness of the church” again, for now he carries it within himself and there is no running away from it anymore, the dark silhouettes are now part of him, he himself is a church in which the cry of Rachel and the martyrs rises to heaven, so “there is no escape, no forgiveness”. He attempts to save his soul and wails: “Light up the lamps!”, but there are no lamps. He realizes that he is “a spent fire, a hearth of scattered ashes”. He already knows that he will “bear the church to my grave”, from now on, consciously. It is this awareness, formulated into language, that signals that there has been a deep and painful transformation of the consciousness and that the repressed contents and apparitions of the conscious mind have finally been, *linguistically and artistically, brought to consciousness*. This is the *mise-en-scène* upon which the unification of the fragmented and dispersed parts of the personality takes place, as a pre-condition for its restauration.

The primal urge of the repressed contents to be recognized and, thus, integrated, inspires the subject to learn the language of the collective unconscious through the treasury of the collective memory and folklore (myths, legends, biblical stories, sayings). Once the subject

decodes the enigmatic language/alphabet of the unconscious, he will be initiated into bringing it to the threshold of consciousness as well as ritualizing it (to repeat the same mechanism).

There are different traditions of ritualization of the deciphering of the enigmatic (the revelation of secrets and mysteries). One of them is the poetic tradition, understood as a form of immanent interpretation of the world. The poetic art stands on the threshold of consciousness. It helps the unconscious to articulate itself, in order to avoid a total destruction of the world that is under its rule. In this role of a “vent” and an “educator”, poetry performs an undeniable cultural and social function. The moral and religious being of the collective and its institutions of control, surveillance and coercion, are in a conflicting position towards the personal being of man, so poetry helps the individual to stand up to the discourses of power.

A Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutical circle [24], as the basis of all understanding, points to the need for the whole of the text to be interpreted with the help of its parts and the parts through the prism of the whole, and thus the circle repeats itself, spirally and ritually. The layered and polysemantic texts, including poems, should be read at least twice in order to understand the poem itself and how it understands the world. Understanding is preceded by reading, very often multiple time, until the moment when the meaning will be rounded off as an experience and it will be stabilized as a pattern and shared with other readers.

Thereby, even this interpretation of the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” should be understood as a series of readings done in different ways but with one superordinate interpretative aim, to present the process of understanding of the poem and in the poem. For we interpret not only the poem but also the world it reflects. The world that the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” reflects is enigmatic and we therefore consider the poem as the home of the enigma. The enigma has its own logos, its own meaning that must be recognized and deciphered. This de-

ciphering must not kill the poem, but unlock the entrance to it. Some poems have multiple entrances, multiple portals. Such is the poem of Koneski and this is why I consider the best interpretative strategy to be the pluralistic, dialogical, syncretic one.

I will not give a final word in the sense of a final interpretation, but I would like to point out the respect that the ending of the poem inspires and which might shed a different light on the meaningful whole and the dominant of the poem. Namely, the poem “Prince Marko’s Church” is a symbolic performance of the bringing to consciousness of the personal unconscious and repressed contents through the collective ones and vice versa, of the collective ones through the personal ones. In this sense, the role of the reader is active and effective. This is also a part of the ritual of realization of the world and self-cognizance. Apart from that, however, this poem should not be read as a manifesto of optimism and as a ticket to sin redemption. It, actually, very melancholically and solipsistically, forewarns that everyone carries their own Shadow of evil within themselves, just as the imaginary Prince Marko/the poet, carries within himself the church to the grave, for “there is no escape, no forgiveness, no memorial”.

Three concluding remarks are suggested by this interpretation. What the poem offers is a return to the faith in the word and its power. What it inspires, in the sense of some optimistic option, is related to the indication of the connection between the linguistic and artistic imagination and their role in the act of bringing the unconscious to consciousness in the individual, who is, after all, a projection of humankind. Even the awareness of the unforgivable nature of some sins is already a form of liberation from the excess of repressed content of the unconscious. The poem indicates an option of Orthodox coming to terms with reality that includes a realization of the gruesome severity of sin (evilgood) and an opportunity for transformation, not just a formal absolution and release from responsibility, which would implicitly mean legitimizing the perpetration of a new sin.

The hope that we can transform and learn a valuable lesson from history is a promise that the world can be a better place, if we are better people. This is the lesson of mercy, philanthropy; it is the principle of empathy and compassion.

The hermeneutic circle, however, does return at the very end of the poem, in the paradoxical realization expressed in a sentence-maxim, according to which “there is no memorial”. Prince Marko built the church to “tell the story” of him, to be a monument of remembering his deeds (both evil and good) but he realizes that “there is no memorial”. Has it all been in vain? This is the most difficult “semantic knot” in the poem that is open to further discussion.

Thus, the question is posed as to what a memory is. The question is posed – does death liberate from the moral burden or is it carried over, through the deeds (as a remembrance), into the collective memory? Is the collective unconscious a treasury of forgotten and trapped memories? Does the poet express a revolt against some cultural memories/monuments because they remind us of evil? Is memory doomed to oblivion? Does the poem, by standing against oblivion, actually perpetuate oblivion, even desperately? Does oblivion have a psychotherapeutic role, just like memory? Is it a cyclical change of times of oblivion and times of remembrance? The ending of the poem suggests an important paradox: what heroes leave behind as remembrance for future generations is actually not a remembrance, but something other than that. The question then rises, what is this Other thing?

This syncretic circle of interpretation begins and ends spirally, opening new semantic horizons as does the circle of the poem itself: by additional interpretative challenges to the reader, in search of its answer. For there is no one truth, as there is no one justice, right? The world is perfectly imperfect, isn't it?

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2. Bodkin, Maud. *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
3. To become a person means to achieve a wholeness of being through word and deed, to unite the human being and his entity (unconscious and conscious, infantile and rational, demonic and divine), to unite the individual existence of man with the universal and with God, with the right to keep the freedom of personal choice. The aware and integrated person can thus make their personal choice without panic and hysteria, without an atavistic pain, rage, hatred and misunderstanding (Jung, 1978, p. 259).
4. Jung, Karl Gustav. *Transcendentna funkcija, Dinamika nesvesnog, Odabrana dela*, tom 1. Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1978. p. 145-172.
5. Kulavkova, Katica (Кулавкова, К.). „Прологмена за една библиотерапија: психолошката и терапевтската улога на поезијата“. Поредокот на слободата. Скопје: МАНУ, 2019, с. 287-308. Prolegomena to a Bibliotherapy: The Psychological and Therapeutic Role of Poetry. *The Order of Freedom* Skopje: MANU, p. 287-308.
6. The quotes given are from the selection of poetry by Koneski *Places and Moments*, 1981.
7. “You didn't watch us dying King Marko – we died./ You didn't listen to our children screaming/ our little birds/ your hair would have fallen out – we listened. Your truth is damned, King Marko...” (quote from the poem “The Fortress”, translated into English by Andrew C. Harvey & Ann Penington [8] – all quotes in the text are from this translation).
8. Koneski, Blaže. *Poems*. Translated from Macedonian into English by Andrew C. Harvey and Anne Penington. London: Andre Deutsch, 1979.
9. Girard, René. *Les origines de la culture*. Paris: Hachette, 2006.
10. “Even if I had wanted to / I could not / Listen to the mothers' heavy curses / While their children screamed in their cradles / On the empty stubble of the burning plain / Stretching their hands out / For a nipple to suck / Finding none / I knew I had to make a fortress / I had to / Against Evil.” (“The Fortress”)
11. Хајдегер, М. *Мишљење и певање*, прево Б. Зец, Београд, 1982, p. 248.
12. Хајдегер, Мартин. *Jezik u pesmi, Iz jednog razgovora o jeziku, Put ka jeziku*. In: *Na putu k jeziku*. Transl. by Božidar Zec. Beograd: Fedon, 2007.
13. Bessière, Jean. *Enigmaticité de la littérature*. Paris: PUF, 1993.
14. In order to achieve catharsis, the paradoxes of existence must first be optimized, for when tension is at its maximum, the weaknesses are seen but so is the way out.

15. Frye, Northrop. *Anatomija kritike. Četiri eseja*. Zagreb: Naprijed, 1979 [1957].

16. Lévy-Bruhl, L. *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Paris: Alcan, 1928. (Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *The 'Soul' of the Primitive*. London: Routledge, 2017.

17. Agnel, Aimé. (ed.) "Participation mystique". In: *Dictionnaire Jung*, p. 127-128, Paris: Ellipses, 2008.

18. Winborn, Mark. (2021). *Participation Mystique: An Overview*, available at: <https://iaap.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Participation-Mystique.pdf> [Winborn, Mark (Ed). *Shared Realities: Participation Mystique and Beyond* (Shiatook, OK: Fisher King Press, 2014)]

19. Lévy-Bruhl (1928) defines participation mystique or *mystical participation* as an *archaic identity*, as "a primordial connection of the primitive man to objects". Free of contradictory concepts, the primitive image of the world is mystical and pre-logical. It is subjected to invisible forces which exist in reality. Carl G. Jung places participation mystique in a different, more dynamic context of connections between the subject, the objective world and his inner being. The mystical part refers, as the name suggests, to an unconscious place, or to the inability of the individual (the subject) to differentiate himself from the object of perception with which he partially identifies, this being the characteristic of the primordial consciousness marked by the unconscious. The image of the object is transferred onto the subject. The collective unconscious has an unconscious identity that is transferred unconsciously in linguistic and other images and can,

thus, later, be interpreted, rationalized and serve therapeutic goals [17, p. 128-129].

20. "This is the great dramatic effect for the sake of which realism is sacrificed" in tragedies and poetic drama [2, p. 332-333].

21. The Persona is the mask (cheek, face) with which a person presents himself to the public, in front of others.

22. The church "St. Dimitrij" is the main church of the Marko's Monastery (Markov manastir) complex in the village Markova Sushica, in the vicinity of Skopje. The temple was built in the middle of the 14th century (1345), by the Macedonian medieval ruler Krale Marko (Prince Marko), who is the founder of the church (ktitor). Prince Marko is shown in royal dress, in the color of ochre, decorated with pearls and stones. In his left hand he holds a scroll reading "I built and wrote this divine temple". In that time to 'write' the church meant to paint it, to draw it with frescoes.

23. They are the sons of Jacob whom God blesses and renames to Israel or "the one who is strong in the fight against God". Jacob must work twice for 7 years to be given the right to marry Rachel, and in the meantime, he has sons with several other women, including Rachel's sister as well.

24. The Hermeneutic Circle (introduced to hermeneutics by the German theologian and interpreter F. Schleiermacher, 1768–1834) points to the fact that the parts of the text can only be rightly understood within its wholeness, and the wholeness only by way of intuitive connection of the parts, called 'divination'.

Note: The Translator is prof. dr. Ana Kečan.