Colloquia Litteraria
UKSW
1/2017

WOJCIECH KACZMAREK

MACIEJEWSKI'S 'METHOD'

Professor Marian Maciejewski (1937-2013) was forged as a scholar in the Catholic University of Lublin. He was a disciple of Prof. Czesław Zgorzelski, a renowned specialist in Polish Romantic poetry, an analyst of the lyric poetry of Mickiewicz and Słowacki, and a distinguished historian of Polish literature 'from the Enlightenment to the Present'.

Maciejewski, in his academic research and in his teaching at university level, followed the methods and practice he learnt from his professors. During the time when he was a student, and later, when he became an academic at the Catholic University of Lublin, a new method for the interpretation of literary texts was constructed. This method allowed researchers to become independent from Marxist literary criticism, which was obligatory at Polish universities after 1945. The negative effects of imposing Marxist literary criticism were felt by scholars who had been educated before World War II, when different literary paradigms prevailed. Some of the researchers surrendered to the administrative pressure of Marxism. Others objected to it and lost their positions at their universities (for example, Konrad Górski from the Mikołaj Kopernik University of Toruń was not allowed to teach) and some researchers emigrated. The Polish department at the Catholic University of Lublin was from the beginning 'an island of freedom'. Scholars there could work freely, without the ideological tribute paid to the communist rulers. These facts should be remembered in order to re-construct the climate which existed in this department, when Prof. Maciejewski's approach to literature was being developed.

His early work was noticed by all major researchers of Polish literature. Even before he got his Ph.D. Maciejewski published in

the prestigious *Pamiętnik Literacki* (*A Literary Journal* (1964, 3, 33-52) a paper entitled "«Rozeznać myśl wód…».(Glossa do liryki lozańskiej Mickiewicza)" ("To Recognize the Thoughts of Water: On Mickiewicz's Lausanne Lyrics"), where he dealt with the key interpretative issues of Mickiewicz's late poetry. This paper was strictly scholarly, is was based on a sound knowledge of literature and history and was extremely strongly connected with the analysed text. He was also the author of a new approach to Juliusz Słowacki's poetry "«Natury poznanie» w lirykach Słowackiego: Dzieje napięć między podmiotem a przedmiotem" ("Studying Nature in Słowacki's lyrics: The Story of Tensions Between Subject and Object") („Pamiętnik Literacki" 1966, 1, 83-107). Another accomplishment of the young scholar was an essay "Od erudycji do poznania. Z dziejów romantycznej liryki opisowej" ("From Erudition to Cognition: Romantic Descriptive Lyrics"), published in *Roczniki Humanistyczne* (*Humanist Annals*) (1966, 1,. 5-79). Thanks to these publications and active participation in the scholarly sessions organized by Instytut Badań Literackich (Institute for Literary Research) in Warsaw Marian Maciejewski quickly became one of the most recognizable of Prof. Czesław Zgorzelski's disciples and started to be regarded as a distinguished scholar of Polish Romantic literature. From the beginning he was one of those brave researchers looking for historical and metaphysical truth. His approach to a literary text was multidimensional: he was interested in the language itself, in the semantics of poetic tropes, dependence on literary tradition, philosophical angles and theological contexts. The great Romantic poetry of Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Norwid, and the contemporary poetry of Herbert, Białoszewski and Miłosz allowed his erudition to bloom, triggering various interpretative contexts and axiological references. His habilitation book *Poetyka – Gatunek – Obraz. W kręgu liryki romantycznej,*(*Poetics—Genre—Picture: In the Sphere of Romantic Lyrics*), which was published by Ossolineum in 1978, was fine proof of this.

Maciejewski's approach to Romantic poetry comprised two different levels: an analysis of Romantic poetics with generic change, and the ideological level of meaning; with Christian elements treated

as a priority. The kerygmatic interpretation of Mickiewicz's poetry should be seen in this context.

When in 1979, during a symposium entitled "Sacrum w literaturze" ("Sacrum in Literature") Maciejewski came up for the first time with the proposal to analyse Mickiewicz's poetry in a kerygmatic fashion, his analytic, historical and literary knowledge was utilized with unparalleled intensity and width. Maciejewski remained faithful to the first methodological guideline he had taken from Prof. Zgorzelski's 'school': the analysed text has primary meaning and is the main focus of a researcher. In what way, then, could the proposed analytical method (Maciejewski himself modestly referred to it as an attempt at a kerygmatic interpretation) have been deemed innovative? The novelty of it was connected with the dynamic understanding of the context surrounding a literary text. The hand of the master, Prof. Zgorzelski, is clearly visible. Zgorzelski believed that one has to understand the reality surrounding the text in order to make a statement about the internal world of the text.

How did Maciejewski make this context dynamic? We can take some examples from his presentation during a symposium in 1979. Let us look at the research steps used by Maciejewski in his kerygmatic analysis of the poem "Do M.Ł W dzień przyjęcia Komunii Św. ("To M.Ł On the Day of Receiving Holy Communion").[1] The analysis was placed in the sequence of poems by Mickiewicz analysed by Maciejewski in the text «Ażeby ciało powróciło w słowo» ("So That a Body Could Return).[2] Maciejewski, while attempting to catch "the clearly Christian dimension of the text, separated merely 'religious' elements from the Christian ones, and moved away from 'nebulous' religious identification" (*PK*, 52) but nevertheless

[1] All quotations from this poem come from: Adam Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, (*Works),* v 1, ed. by Czesław Zgorzelski, Warszawa 1993, 322.

[2] Marian Maciejewski, «*ażeby ciało powróciło w słowo*». *Próba kerygmatycznej interpretacji liryki religijnej Mickiewicza*, in Marian Maciejewski, «*Ażeby ciało powróciło w słowo*» .*Próba kerygmatycznej interpretacji literatury*, Lublin 1991, 49–96. Hereafter, *PK*.

remained primarily a scholar of literature, not religion, and he stated emphatically:

> At the same time I would like to follow the rules of literary analysis. Even when the analysis of other aspects takes over, I will still adhere to literary analysis and will be led by the existing texts of literary criticism and the constant focus on the specificity of a poetic text. (*PK*, 52.)

This quotation points to two key methodological assumptions:

1. separating the 'merely religious' from the Christian;
2. conducting the interpretation in the manner of literary analysis in the historical perspective.

The first assumption was explained by Maciejewski at the beginning of his essay. The discrimination of religiosity ('the natural religiosity') from faith, as manifested in Christianity, was derived from the theological tradition of the early Church and confirmed by the Second Vatican Council. The difference between the religious stance and faith is as follows: in the former a man seeks contact with God (*religare*); in the latter it is God Himself who seeks a man and reveals Himself. Maciejewski weakens this dichotomy by referring to Biblical epiphanies: Abraham's reception of three angels, St. Mary's Annunciation, the conversion of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Maciejewski writes:

> The fact that God seeks a man and not vice versa—because one cannot seek someone you do not know, someone who has not revealed Himself—is fundamental for Judeo-Christian experience expressed in the Bible.[…] The seeking of a man by God, and not vice versa, in a clear way shows the difference between revelation and religion; at the same time it defines Christianity. […] And it is exactly this interpretative context which will allow in Mickiewicz's lyric poetry (and elsewhere) the distinguishing of different types of 'sacralization' of the world originating from natural religions, of Otto's *mysterium tremendum* from the true epiphany, created not by fear, but by love of God coming to a man most fully in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus

> Christ, to bring him concrete salvation in the freedom of God's children through the gift of New Creation. (*PK*, 53)

The first assumption formulated in this way is embedded into the second one, which states that the rules of literary interpretation of the text are to be obeyed. However, it is only in the confrontation of an interpreted poetic text that the erudition and mastery of Maciejewski come to the fore. First of all, one gets the impression that alongside the analysis taking into account the differences between natural religiosity and Christian faith there is another dimension introduced: that of secondary critical literature, with its findings added to the interpreted text (through footnotes and references to the main text). Let us note that the analysis of the before mentioned poem, which was written in January 1830, is preceded by a general remark summing up Mickiewicz's earlier achievements as a religious poet.

> Sacralization of the chosen elements of the world, characteristic for all religions, sharp separation of the sacred from the profane, which is grounded—perhaps—in the unconscious denial of God's omnipotence, will also influence the imagery used in Mickiewicz's poems written in Rome and in Dresden, which is so clearly defined thematically.(*PK*, 60).

In this way Maciejewski is preparing a move in the direction of the analysis of this poem:

The cosmic method, of atemporal, sacralising construction from "The Hymn" (On the Day of St. Mary's Annunciation) will return after eleven years in the construction of a "childish", pure protagonist of the poem "To M.Ł. On the Day of Receiving of Holy Communion". A rococo spectre made of "rays of eternal grace",[3] which are carried by a "guardian angel", was perfectly separated from the profane aspect of reality, where the subject exists on the side of "hardened sinners" [...] (*PK*, 61).

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[3] Maciejewski refers to the text of Wacław Borowy, who was struck by the 'aloofness' of this poem. See Wacław Borowy, *Liryki religijne*, in :Wacław Borowy, *O poezji Mickiewicza*, vol. 2, Lublin 1958, 13.

Maciejewski explains his argument with the following quotation

> […]
> […] święta i skromna! – Grzesznicy nieczuli,
> Gdy my w spoczynku skroń ospałą złożym,
> Tobie klęczącej przed barankiem Bożym,
> Jutrzenka usta modlące się stuli,
> Wtenczas zlatuje Anioł twój obrońca,
> Czysty i cichy jak światło miesiąca:
> Zasłonę marzeń powoli rozdziela
> A troskliwości pełen i wesela,
> Z takim nad tobą schyla się objęciem,
> Jak matka nad swym sennym niemowlęciem.
> […].[4]

The "kerygmatic eye" with which Maciejewski looks into Mickiewicz's text helps to see the way in which the child undergoes divinization. It was not achieved through the act of the incarnation of the Word into human reality, abolishing the division into the sacred and the profane, but, according to Maciejewski, it has in this poem:

> […] reference to a sacramental ideal, understood in static terms, sacralising [the lyric 'I'—W.K.] in a mechanical and religious manner. Religious are also the subject's reactions, who is led not by God's love, but by fear. In this humility must manifest itself as an ascetic virtue growing from 'childish' dispositions, not as sharp perception of truth about oneself. (*PK*, 62)

Let us note that Maciejewski draws his conclusion from the observation of the poetic's world structure taken from the analysis

[4] Holy and humble- Hardened sinners, When we, tired, go to sleep/You kneel in front of the Lamb of God/Aurora will silence your praying lips. And then the Angel, your guardian, pure and quiet as Luna's light will come"/A curtain of dreams slowly unveils,/Filled with alertness and mirth,/He bends over you,/As a mother over her baby

of Mickiewicz's poem. He sees the tension between the divinized child and an old man, who cannot muster humility out of his voluntary stance. Maciejewski turns to Mickiewicz once again to confirm this observation:

> Dziś cię za stołem swym Chrystus ugościł,
> Dziś Anioł tobie niejeden zazdrościł;
> Ty spuszczasz oczy, które Bóstwem gorą! –
> Jak ty mnie swoją przerażasz pokorą! –
> […].[5]

And again, Maciejewski's conclusion is concerned with the religious thinking of Mickiewicz:

> This maximum awareness of being a Christian, although born out of sacramental divinization, betrays the treatment of Christianity in religious categories, obviously in the understanding of 'religion' accepted here [as natural religiosity—W.K]. Being in grace is understood not as a way, but as a pulsating state analogous, to a certain extent, to cyclic returns of cosmic epiphany. (*PK*, 62)

Maciejewski discovers the axiological foundations of the world presented in the poem through the analysis of the lyric 'I'. He observes that in the analysed poem the lyric 'I' went down "from the pedestal of a bard-prophet and started showing his feebleness" (*PK*, 63). Maciejewski exemplifies this observation with the final quotation:

> […] Ja bym dni wszystkich rozkosz za nic ważył,
> Gdybym noc jedną, tak jak ty przemarzył.[6]

His main characteristic feature as an analyst of this poem is the combination of literary criticism viewed from the historical

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[5] Today you have been hosted at the table by Christ,/Today you have been envied by more than one angel;/You drop your eyes, filled with God!/– O, how much you scare me with your humility!–/[…]

[6] I would take the bliss of all days for nothing,/if only I could dream for night as you do

perspective with a kerygmatic depth of religious references. For Maciejewski, the religious aspect, based both on natural religiosity and on Christian understanding of faith, becomes the central point for his analytical and interpretative observations. The novelty of such an analytical approach is based on the ability to extract from the text consequences, often hidden deeply in their symbolism and deep internal structure, which can be seen in the ontological situation of the lyric 'I' and in the constructed world. Maciejewski writes:

> These constant incarnations of God into concrete situations is undoubtedly a *novum* in Mickiewicz's lyric poetry and in Romantic lyric poetry at the same time [...]. (*PK*, 72).

This observation, as it were, forces the implementation of a tool such as kerygmatic analysis, which repeatedly unveils this *novum* and allows us to gauge its intensity in the structure of the world of the poem. Maciejewski convinces us of this when he moves on to analyse yet another poem:"Rozmowa wieczorna" ["Conversation at Evening"], in which he sees a correct intuition in the field of Christian thinking:

> In "Conversation at Evening" the lines which are most convincing tell us about subjective truth and the line showing the divinization of the subject; this radiant cruising of good and love reminds us of the sacralization of a girl from the poem "To M.Ł.". Placing oneself as God's child is also not accidental; this radiant transformation of the subject brings new life to the traditional lexis of mystic poetry. (*PK*, 73).

This statement is, obviously, supported with a quotation:

> I każda dobra myśl, jak promień wraca
> Znowu do Ciebie, do źródła, do słońca
> I nazad płynąc znowu mnie ozłaca,
> śle blask, blask biorę i blask mam za gońca.
> I każda dobra chęć, Ciebie wzbogaca,

I znowu za nią płacisz mi bez końca.
Jak Ty na niebie, Twój sługa, Twe dziecię
Niech się tak cieszy, tak błyszczy na świecie".[7]

In his commentary Maciejewski writes:

> The truth of this line is underscored by the next line, showing the subject's participation in the murder of the Lord of Glory, who has been led to the cross by the subject's attitudes, vile thinking, vile wishing, and wrath. These attitudes correspond with the evangelical description of Christ's Passion, with violence dealt to the innocent, with piercing with a spear, with forcing Him to drink vinegar, with crucifixion and entombment. (*PK*, 73).

Maciejewski sees in this poem a mechanism of 'conversion' of the subject, who is shown his sins by God, but at the same time is shown God's love, which eventually leads to the acceptance of kenosis.

Lekarzu wielki! Ty najlepiej widzisz.
Chorobą moją, mną się nie brzydzisz![8]

All the time Maciejewski remains close to the analysed text. He does not burden it with things which are not there, nor does he doubt its value.[9] Mickiewicz's poem leads the researcher to the question about the 'depth' of the subject's initiation into Christianity. Maciejewski wrote towards the end of his analysis:

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[7] And each good thought, returns as a beam/Again to You, to source, to sun,/And while it returns, it gilds me again, sends radiance, I take radiance and have it for my messenger,/And each good intention enriches You,/And You again pay me for it endlessly./As you do in Heaven, let Your servant,/Your child have joy, glitter here on earth .

[8] O great Healer! You see through my Sickness and yet are not repelled by me.

[9] Incidentally, Maciej Nowak, in his article entitled "O krytyce karygmatycznej bez entuzjazmu" ("On Kerygmatic Criticism without Enthusiasm") (Ethos, 2013, 103, 259-269), showed total ignorance when he wrote that in kerygmatic criticism texts are "used" and "their autonomy is raped, which leads to the violation of literary research, which is turned into an expression of a given attitude to the world and man." (264) The polemic impetus deprived the author of rationalism in his judgement of the field of research undertaken by Maciejewski.

> Called by "Terrible Judge" he [the lyric 'I' of the poem—W.K.] allowed his life to be tried at court. However, in the conclusion of the text he remains a Romantic, an individualist wearing his pride as "mist's garment". He is a brother of Konrad from the Great Improvisation, too proud to let people judge him, still predestined to a conversation only with God. However, he knows his existential situation well [...]
>
> Gdy mię spokojnym zowią dzieci świata,
> Burzliwą duszę kryję przed ich okiem,
> I obojętna duma, jak mgły szatą,
> Wnętrzne pioruny pozłaca obłokiem.
> I tylko w nocy – cicho – na Twe łono
> Wylewam burzę, we łzy roztopioną. (*PK*. 75)[10]

The quotations used above show the way in which Maciejewski used kerygmatic interpretation, and they can reveal the foundations of his own research method. It is characterized by the parallel analysis of the historical and literary environment with the deep analysis of the religious and Christian context. This conjunction creates a unique "Maciejewski's hermeneutics", explaining the holistic ontology of the world constructed in a literary text. Maciejewski's analytical method used in his analysis of Mickiewicz's poems written in Lausanne was very finely summarized by Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska in the afterword to his final book:

His creative invention is strictly and precisely connected with the following contexts: 1. Thorough knowledge of poetry before Mickiewicz (which is relatively rare with Romanticism scholars. 2. Thorough knowledge of Mickiewicz's own works 3. Thorough knowledge of philosophical and theological contexts gathered with the conviction of the necessity of an appropriate choice. Marian Maciejewski's hermeneutics is perhaps the only type of hermeneutics

[10] When I am called peaceful by children of the world,/I hide from the thunderous soul./ And indifferent pride as mist's garment./Internal thunder glitters through the clouds. And only at night—quietly—at your bosom,/I pour thunderstorm diluted into tears.

devoted to research on Polish Romanticism. It is very responsible, and its results can be verified continuously by poetic texts themselves, by discipline and precision. Maciejewski's hermeneutics perfectly synchronizes various methods and attitudes, and leads to the unveiling of new dimensions and possibilities of the text's understanding.[11]

Maciejewski's 'method' is based on thorough reflection on all aspects of a literary text and the anthropological concept underlying it, and particularly on the 'spiritual condition' of man, the subject of a literary text. The results of its application are best seen in the texts left to us by Marian 'Maciek' Maciejewski.

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[11] Bernadetta Kuczera-Chachulska, *Posłowie. Poezja i kontemplacja*, in Marian Maciejewski, «Wrzucony do bytu otchłani». *Liryka lozańska i jej konteksty*, Lublin 2012, 173.