

The Poetry that Presents Itself

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Abstract: Poetry appears, that is, it is printed or published. Its temporality has the potential to be a space for sharing, but when the space is waiting for it, when it is waiting, then the event of which it is the sign already occupies a suspended place in the world. For the surface of recognition is not essentially different from Pessoa's rosewood chest: the actual sharing of the true poem for the purpose of community is indefinitely incomplete, and the reading is still and always necessary, being indefinitely exhaustible. The poem is a reserve for the appearance of the meaning of the common.

Keywords: publication, impression, space, time, event, community, recognition, reading, politics.

Poetry can make itself present in a shared time, but it can do so in two ways, according to what Roberto Calasso calls “a chronic exposure to appearance”.¹

Firstly, because it tends to occupy a social space, a surface of knowledge of the works that affect an era – it gets published, joins that number and provides a common space for the event that is configured and constituted by its real poems. To know about the poetry that emerges means to recognize it, because the knowable poetic event needs its diffusion in space (the Arch-Earth), ordering itself side by side and at the interpersonal intervals where the possible plays out.

The possible depends on the space streaked with expressions which either go from being to non-being (re-joining the nothingness of conformity where use betrays the sayable), or else go from non-being to being. (re-joining historical life through the confrontation of the forces and limits of language where all recognition takes place). This double game, this reversibility between the trysts of the sayable and the thinkable, this taking into account of the important (the serious), this “leaving the mark”, is the airy law of the History of humans. From this first case, where the publication is an impression, where it therefore reaches the thoughtful sensitivity of a community (to the series of impressionabilities), we can decline certain proper names as they form the indices of a strong and recognizable gesture since during the poet's lifetime (that “instaurator of discursivity” that is a poetic authority is first of all contemporary, one who shares and is shared with the people): Sophocles, Dante, Wordsworth, Hugo, for example, were able to find a space of recognition, therefore a space recognized by the authority of the emergence of their real poems. The diffused reality of those poems is due to their force of truth, which makes them true poems (capable of manifesting the thinkable), not only welcomed into the world, but received

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¹ *La Folie Baudelaire*, 2008.

with gratitude insofar as they were expected. The contemporary poet is then absolutely modern, because he immediately admits the signature of his relevant intervention; by what it dictates, it activates new movements.

Secondly, the event of a poem can project itself into the present without occupying the slightest social space: Emily Dickinson, secluded behind the glass of her house, or Pessoa writing for his rosewood chest, renounce the space of anthumous sharing – they are delivered to pure time or, at least, to reduced space, to the solitude of a haunted point, when the solitary creator makes the language pass from non-being to being according to the power of a community that has not yet taken place. Their language is a suspended movement. The real poems have the power of contemporary life while they are modern or relevant: their space is concentrated and unknown, awaiting adequate recognition, providential relaunch. The event of an unrecognized provident poetry is the preparation for the posthumous or preposterous sharing of the idiom, of the communicable singularity, of the one-by-one communication that it implies or envelops; it is a suspended preparatory event, returned to its pure implicit temporality, to the power of a restrained sharing. Its detention or restraint in a moment of history is not a matter of curse; it depends, on the contrary, on the slow relaxation of the populated point constituted by a maker called a poet.

The distinction between the two ways of bringing the present to life or of designating the living present in a language, makes it possible to understand why a large number of published poems occupy a social space which does not give rise to any living sharing, but above all it suggests that such a sharing of the passage from non-being to being is always in danger of being compromised with the "spiritual mechanics" which mire the epoch in its miseries. In other words: true poems, by publishing themselves or by withdrawing them from public, always retain the power of intense presentation and, indefinitely exhaustible, remain incapable of giving full rise to a community, for the reason that they are never fully shareable. They relaunch their reading from an era to another one, parallel to the policies that claim to provide an answer to the miseries where nothingness is realized. We can then say that true poems threaten the non-being of irrelevant and destructive politics, without ever configuring a community in an organic space-time, and so much the better, because if that were the case, there would be no more of history and the beings would be lambs incapable of thinking of preventing the covetousness of the wolves.

Life, document: a poem

Is life a poem
or pre-poem?
Does it appear before coming to be for
some body or someone?
A thoughtful community says it is
already poem,
puppeteer silence,
as the novel already is
supposedly the drama of the raw
materials of the open conscience.
Is the conscience lying low?
Is she covered by the living?
And is the poem Pinocchio?
Does it need strings to make itself present?
Conscience, infinitely regressing in the raw
of a manipulative, voiceless life?
If life is a poem, then
poetry, that factory of words
whose conscious verse is the horizon
is buried: the silence of life
actuates or activates it and dictates its law
with strings of words, like a show-off ribbon
with savant lines, that let speak
but themselves don't talk anymore.
But the poem, prepared
in the living end of silence
speak and cause to be spoken. It calls for other lines
to emerge from buried silence.
Pre-poem is the silence of death,
nonappearance, nonpresence
rather than music of the spheres.
It expresses the absence of the previous
the divider.
Is the poem the boustrophedon of life
after phenomenology?
If so, Poem is document.
Does it learn life
which is passive prose (phrased inertia)
before poetry?
The document brings
what a first silence refuses.
The mute world becomes peopled with eloquent life,
And expression, and outward impression.

First is the resurrection;
the poem is uplifting, or resurrectional,
mute and remade puppet that talks
before the lives and half-lives it shares.
The first life arises alone like an island
in long retention.
Why poems
if all else is already isolated in life?
Is life a carp?
Carp Island?
Each one must talk
and answer as he pleases
for the absence, if there is².

Translated by Arbër Zaimi

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2 I gave a first version of this poem for the anniversary of a phenomenology journal of which I was the co-founder, in another life (Alter, n° 21 | 2013, p. 29-31.) François-David Sebbah made a short commentary on it, delicate and interesting, of which I reproduce a few words here: "The reader will read. He will read this words not like a more or less academic philosophy, very far also from any great untouched lyricism; very written and very melodious words that document life – which, indirectly, questions the ineradicable, the stubborn phenomenological naivety; the one that means life; the pure life – and what is more, believes to achieve it. This word elsewhere speaks of life, life before reflection – but not without it; life, the interrogative rhythm of saying/said – without prosaism – whose immediacy is not transparency, which thwarts its capture in a meaning, without really cancelling it; the life that worries the understanding – upsets it a little; and can only be understood that way. If life is already a poem, then "poetry is defunct", but if "life is pre-poem", remember that "pre-poem is dead silence", and that "poem is boustrophedon of life, after phenomenology".
A poem: when the divisions are no longer so clear (between silence and eloquence, between death and life – life which can be "shared half-lives"), when the resurrection is primary, and expression, always an "outwards impression". »