

Emilio Pascual

Criptograms

The sage French orientalist, Jean François Champollion, wrote a treatise on The Giants of the Bible in which he affirmed that their names, according to Hebrew etymology, corresponded to personified natural phenomena.

Naming things – one of the jobs of the human being since the Genesis – is not only a system for understanding each other as much as possible: it is also a form of taking possession of an object. God is the Unnameable par excellence because his Being is indefinite. And so it is that a thing is captured, apprehended only when it is understood. In a way, it passes into the possession of the other.

Ela Wozniowska paints cryptograms. It is a form of defining the world, of naming things that inhabit this peculiar universe: from a rose, which is without a why, to the algebra, a palace of precise crystals, according to Borges.

The cryptogram is a language and, as such, encloses some mystery. It comes from the Greek *kryptos* (= concealed, hidden, secret) and from *gramma* (= a drawing, a painting, a letter). The term is valid both for a text written in cryptography and for Ela Wozniowska's symbols. In the first case, it attempts to confuse the non-initiate; in the second one, maybe like the evangel, it tries to conceal things to the wise and show them to the little ones.

There is no language without some misunderstanding, nor is there a symbol not subject to variable interpretation. Likewise the cryptograms. But Ela Wozniowska has endowed them with an internal logic which makes them beautiful in this confused universe. One notices in them some perplexity and some astonishment. Neither do they lack intelligence nor wisdom as testified by the wisdom of the serpent and the intelligence of Minerva's owl.

There is a series of seventy-four cryptograms whose meaning is transcribed. I have allowed myself to read them at a certain ordered chance so as to edify a number of painstaking hendecasyllables: in the end, the universe is but a construction of things, which someone made bold to name for the first time, till it evolves into a construction of words. A poem, a novel is not a different thing.

The World in a Criptogram

Sleeplessness in the depth of the night;
the soft yesterday of loneliness and shade;
the judge of the masculine or the feminine;
the bull greeting the princess;
days of work and of rest;
or the tenderness of the guardian of the dawn;
indolence – the twin of strength –;
the worry inseparable
from the fear of jumping into full spring;
the challenge of the doubt, the river
of memory, and the just growth
of the scholarly science at midnight;
a pinch of voice on the road
of time, which is the west and cradle;
the boss's pretension in the meeting
of the foreigner with the stranger;
the strenght of the ear disrespectful
to the duality of the wayfarer;
the sister water, a boomerang which floods
the formation of goat troops;
the egoistic causes of the idea
smudging the air with false messages...
syllables are from a vast cryptogram
or a labirynth which art discovers.

Emilio Pascual, 1998