

# The Spirit And The Letter: Chirographic And Semiotic Studies

## الروح والحرف دراسات في فن الخط وعلم الدلالات

William Wolkowski

### ملخص:

قد تكون عبارة 'من فيثاغورس إلى بو' هي العنوان الملخص لهذه الورقة. فبدايات الكتابة والعلامات الموجودة على المخطوطات تعود في الأصل إلى فن الرسم داخل الكهوف وتزيين الجداريات. ومن الممكن أن تقوم تلك العلامات وتعبيراتها الفنية بتقديم معاني عميقة والتعبير عن ترابط داخلي.

ويعتبر التفاعل المستمر بين الرموز ودلالاتها موضوعاً لأبحاث فنية وأدبية في نفس الوقت، فهي لذلك أبحاث تمتد عبر أكثر من منهج وأكثر من ثقافة. أما دراستي في علم الدلالات والخطوط فهي تقوم بالبحث في عدد متنوع من الموضوعات، وكلها مشروعات تبحث في العلاقة بين الروح والحرف، بين الداخلي والخارجي، وبين الشكل والمضمون. وخلال العشرين عاماً الماضية، عُرضت دراساتي في مجال الجرافيك بست وعشرين لغة في أربع عشرة دولة عبر القارات الخمس.

The origin of handwriting and manuscript signs goes back to the art of cave paintings and mural decorations. These marks and their artistic expression may present deep meaning and internal coherence. The permanent interaction between the stroke and its significance is a subject of research which is both artistic and literary, therefore transdisciplinary and transcultural.

My chirographic and semiotic studies (a synonym of calligraphic) investigate a variety of subjects, and they are all research projects on the relationship and interface between Spirit and Letter, between the Inner and the Outer, between Essence and Form. Among artistic techniques at the disposal of the chirographer, a pointillist impression of 'a rising letter' prevents the eye from concentrating on detail, thus producing a dynamic and tridimensional effect. Color spheres enhance the dynamics of a fixed image.

A stroke of a banner composed of three colored spaces also introduces movement, similar to a Mobius band.

By using three primary colors, a state of completeness is suggested, or of accomplishment, a constant and invariable character. Other color combinations in this triple space translate various interactions between the Essence of the text and its graphic Form.

In 1987, together with my father Jan Wolkowski who operated the Art Scriptorium in the Fine Arts Building in Chicago for thirty years, we were invited to present a collection 'The Gospel in Many Tongues' with excerpts from the Gospel of Saint John in twenty-seven languages in the Crypt of Sacre Coeur Basilica of Montmartre in Paris. In 1998 the Znad Wilii Gallery in Vilnius, Lithuania, offered 'The renewal of the art of Benedictine Illumination in the XX<sup>th</sup> century'. This was also on display at the Castle of Piast Princes in Opole and Wroclaw, Poland. It travelled next to the Library of the Fine Arts Department of Nicolas Copernicus University in Torun, Poland in 1999.

All subsequent exhibits present my personal research.

In 2003, as part of the Frederic Chopin collection of the Polish Library in Paris, a study of a quote by Solange Clesinger in different languages was on display in Museums in Tokyo and Vienna.

A permanent presentation of 'The Spirit and the letter between the Loir and Loire Valleys' is offered since July 2004 at the Chateau de la Voloniere at Ponce sur Loir, Sarthe, France.

In October of the same year, the medieval Saint Leonard Chapel in Croissy sur Seine, near Paris, hosted an opus 'George Sand and her friends' with references of ten outstanding representatives of arts and letters.

In March 2005, for the sesquicentennial of the birth of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, a collection was shown at the Robert Schuman Center in Kaunas, Lithuania and Espace Reine de Saba in Paris.

In September, Schuman's House in Scy-Chazelles, Lorraine, France invited a commemoration of 'Robert Schuman, the Father of Europe', which was also on view in the Center in Kaunas, Lithuania.

The same year marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the French scientist and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Exhibits in several languages noting this event were held in the Society in Montreal, Canada, at the Townhall of the Fifth District in Paris, Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York and Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia.

Also in March, the St Joan of Arc Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, presented references from history and literature. In May, a collection 'The Two Miloszes' (Czeslaw and Oscar), poets who wrote respectively in Polish (Nobel Prize laureate) and in French, was exhibited at the Hotel de l'Aigle Noir in Fontainebleau, France in August and at the Robert Schuman Center in Scy-Chazeles, France.

The centennial of the birth of the French writer Jean-Paul Sartre was honored at the French Institute in London in March and the Institute for Linguistics in Gabes, Tunisia in December.

The Wine Museum in Verzenay, Champagne Area in France, was the location of an exhibition 'Wine, the Spirit and the Letter' in October.

In June 2006, the Abbey Saint-George of Boscherville in Normandy, France, exhibited the 'Rose, Spirit and the Letter'. During the same month, the Monastery of Veniere in Boyer, France, displayed the Prologue to the 'Rule of St Benedict' in fourteen languages.

During the Cultural Heritage Celebration in September, the Rene Descartes Museum in Touraine, France, honored him with a collection of his citations. In December, following the death of the French artist Raymond Devos, a homage was held at the Cultural Center of his birthplace in Mouscron, Belgium.

In January 2007, a selection on Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French writer and author of 'The Little Prince' was presented at the City Hall of Sceaux, France. 'The Curies: the family of five Nobel Prizes' were celebrated in November 2005 at Sceaux, France for the 70th anniversary of the Nobel Prize in chemistry and at the Peugeot Cultural Center in Paris in May 2007.

In May 2008, the House of Joan of Arc in Orleans, France was the site of a collection of historical and literary quotations on her subject. This was the second time after it was shown in the Las Vegas exhibition held three years earlier.

The Cultural Heritage Celebration of September witnessed the venue of an exhibit in French and Latin on Bernard of Clairvaux at the Abbey of Clarte Dieu, Saint Paterne Racan, in Touraine, France.

The current year 2009 is marked by an exhibit in April at the Museum of the History of Medicine,

Rene Descartes University in Paris, with thirteen references from Hippocrates to the Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine for the discovery of the AIDS virus. In May, the Townhall of Fontainebleau, France received excerpts in twenty-four languages of the poet Oscar Milosz, in celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. In June, the Nelligan Library and Gallery in Quebec, Canada, hosted the birth centennial of the French writer Regine Pernoud. This being the birth bicentennial of the American writer and poet Edgar Allan Poe, my collection in nineteen languages of his work is presented at conferences celebrating him at the Universities of Moscow (Russia), Alcala, Caceres, Valencia (Spain), Keio (Tokyo), Mons (Belgium), Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Warsaw (Poland), Baia Mare (Romania), Valparaiso (Chile). The bicentennial of the birth of the Polish poet Juliusz Slowacki will be celebrated with a collection in six languages at the Nelligan Library and Gallery in

Quebec. As I write this paper, an opus on the Russian writer Nicolas Gogol in 23 official languages of the European Union in being created for the bicentennial of his birth, which will be celebrated in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Quebec.

My research in geopoetics has lead me in 2003, to publish a compilation of one poem in 109 languages, by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz. According to Index Translationum UNESCO, this is the most extensive investigation of any poem worldwide. Several chirographic projects combine both directions, such as a citation of Oscar Milosz in twenty-four languages, Arthur Rimbaud in thirty-five languages, Edgar Allan Poe in nineteen languages, a sonnet by Ronsard in seven, or the Ode to Joy by Schiller in nine languages. These are the precursors of a European Poetic Space, the final goal being a '23 by 23 matrix of poetry' in all official languages of the European Union.