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Jungiaanse alchemistiese transformasie in Breyten Breytenbach se bundel:
op weg na kû (2019)

Jungian alchemical transformation in Breyten Breytenbach's volume of poetry:
on the way to kû (2019)

Abstract

This PhD dissertation examines the possibility of a Jungian alchemical interpretation of Breyten Breytenbach's verses in the poetry collection: on the way to kû (2019). Breytenbach's works are characterized by both a deep engagement with social, political and existential themes, as well as an exploration of spirituality influenced by his Buddhist beliefs, especially Zen Buddhism. These characteristics also leave room for an alchemical Jungian lens of investigation. Jungian analytical psychology suggests that alchemy serves as a symbolic bridge between Gnosticism and modern psychology, emphasizing the transformative journey towards individuation and the realization of the true 'Self'. Jungian theory posits that the tension of opposites within the collective unconscious catalyses an archetypal transformation essential to individuation, a central theme in Jung's work. With parallels between alchemical processes, the opus in circulatio, and psychological transformation, Jung refers to steps within alchemy such as: nigredo, albedo and rubedo, which symbolize purification, and which lead to the achievement of the philosopher's stone – the epitome of transformation.

The purpose of the research is twofold in nature: firstly, to investigate a Jungian alchemical interpretation of the verses in Breytenbach's collection on the way to kû (2019) and secondly, to evaluate the potential perception of these poems as literary alchemy.

Jung's view of alchemy as representative of psychic transformation and literary alchemy serve as a theoretical framework for the interpretation of the poems. Jungian literary criticism, specifically Jung's two essays "On the relationship of Analytical Psychology to poetry" (1931) and "Psychology and Literature" (1950), which connect to close reading, are used as a method for analysing and interpreting the poetic language, symbolism and thematic content of the verses. A Jungian reader response theory was also explored during the study.

Alchemical processes and signs have been clearly identified within a number of verses in the collection. The poetic journey is synonymous with an alchemical journey, with reference to the steps:

nigredo as dominant, albedo and rubedo indicating the circulatio in alchemy, which can also be interpreted as Jungian transformation. By examining the interplay between alchemical theory and poetic expression, this thesis offers a Jungian alchemical interpretation of verses in Breytenbach's volume on the way to kû (2019) and thus can these verses also be considered as literary alchemy.

Keywords: Breyten Breytenbach, Carl Jung, analytical psychology, alchemy, literary alchemy, Jungian literary criticism, nigredo, circulatio, transformation.