

Entelechy of the Emanational Form: Zenon Fajfer's Poems of Potentiality

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Zenon Fajfer's introduced into poetry an original, interactive form called "the emanational poem," in which the multilevel acrostic is generative of simultaneously coexisting dimensions of text. The poet has used it in several of his works to render simultaneity, visibility and invisibility, potentiality and actuality. The article discusses the emanational form in view of Aristotle's concept of *entelechy*. Exploring affordances of the electronic and printed media, the author explicates how the potentiality for mobility and intertextuality can be actualised in Fajfer's "Ars Poetica," *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę*, and *Powieki*, drawing attention to the role of the reader in this process. She mentions the aporetic tension between the principle of Aristotelian *entelechy* and postmodern concept of intertextuality, also referencing the relevance of Ned Rossiter's network theory to the interpretation of Fajfer's work. Focusing on *Powieki*, a multimodal cycle of emanational poems, published as a compound of the material book and the digital poems in the CD, the author postulates, following Pisarski (2014) and Marecki (2018), that it is an entelechy of the hypertext. Moreover, this richly hyperlinked cycle of poems can be seen as a rewriting of the Orphean katabasis. It invites contemplation of a complex, multidimensional space that should be explored in "slow," or close reading, which defies typical expectations of electronic literature audiences. Finally, it is argued that Fajfer's print-born digital hypertexts activate potentialities entailed in the matter(iality) of the writing in both media, the old and the new.

KEYWORDS: Zenon Fajfer's emanational form, "Ars Poetica", *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę*, *Powieki*, entelechy, hypertext, katabasis

How many people know that the word "scuba" is in fact an acronym for "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus"? Most of us use it without realising its underlying meaning. Kabbalists implemented a similar method, called notarikon, to discover divine message arguably hidden in the text of the Torah. In it the first or last letters of Biblical words are treated as a kind of shorthand for phrases or sentences.¹ Notarikon is akin to an acrostic, which poets occasionally use to code their names, or names of dedicatees, in the first letters of a verse or stanza. In his short story "The Vane Sisters," Vladimir Nabokov resorted to a similar device to introduce an ironic twist to the tale. Its homodiegetic narrator is skeptical about

¹ S. Steinmetz, *Dictionary of Jewish Usage: A Guide to the Use of Jewish Terms*, Lanham, et al. 2005, pp. 127–129.

a metaphysical dimension of reality and disdainful of unconventional ways of reading practiced by one of the siblings to communicate with the spirits. When they die, they send him a message through two acrostically coded sentences, but he remains unaware of it. It remains in potentiality, unless the attentive readers actualise it, providing they take the hint from a few references to acrostics.

In literary writing, such devices are usually employed ‘locally,’ so to speak, to encode just a single word or a phrase, and they are usually considered gimmicks. Zenon Fajfer’s emanational poems, though related to them, are much more elaborate forms, functionally and semantically motivated. I propose to read them in view of Aristotle’s notion of *entelechy*, the concept the ancient philosopher coined to describe that which actualises what ensues from the very nature of a thing and exists as merely potentiality until it develops into its full form.

As Joe Sachs explains, according to the Stagiryte,

[t]he primary fact about the world we experience is that it consists of *independent things (ousiai)*, each of which is a *this (tode ti)*, an enduring whole, and separate (*choriston*), or intact. Since thinghood is characterized by *wholeness (to telos)*, the wholeness of each independent thing has the character of an *end (telos)*, or *that for the sake of which (hou heneka)* it does all that it does. This doing is therefore the being at work that makes it what it is, since it is *what it keeps on being in order to be at all (to ti n einai)*. Thus thinghood and being at work merge into the single idea of being at work staying itself (*entelecheia*).²

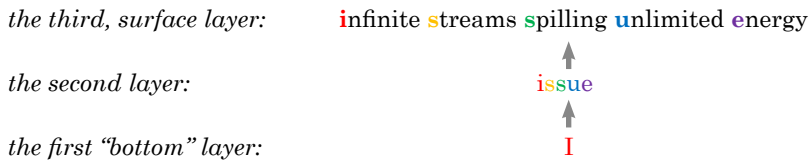
Sachs further analyses the meaning of *entelechy* by discussing its etymology, showing how Aristotle fuses three different roots to indicate the “active, dynamic character [...] present in the very material (*hul*) of each thing, as a potency (*dunamis*) spilling over into the activity that gives the thing its form (*eidōs* or *morph*).”³ Thus, *entelechy* can be understood as a process in which something develops, fulfilling its latent potential, in order to attain an intrinsically designed shape.

While the ancient philosopher speaks about *entelechy* with regard to the natural phenomena, Fajfer invests words, in their materiality of written characters, with similar potency that can be realised, or actualised, in the emanational poetic form. For him, each single letter of a word is an “active, dynamic character,” vested with the power to “emanate” words, thereby

² J. Sachs, *Aristotle’s Physics: A Guided Study*, New Brunswick, NJ 1995, p. 31 (original emphasis).

³ *Ibidem*.

“issuing” a meaningful text.⁴ Technically, the process of writing can be illustrated by a simple, three-layered example:



In reading, one proceeds in the reverse direction, starting from the surface layer. As in notarikon, the readers are expected to put together the initials of every word in order to tease out a text. Thus decoded text should be subjected to the same procedure, until the readers reach the last, “bottom” word. Then, the movement can be traced back, and the poem can be read as if one was moving from the “bottom” word upwards. So, in its entirety, the emanational poem can be envisaged as an *entelechy* of this word, a multidimensional space which the reader can traverse downwards and upwards through subsequent layers of a complete, multi-layered text.

Fajfer explains that when devising the emanational poem he wanted to create a form capable of rendering simultaneity, and to communicate the experience of “the Non-visible. The Invisible but present. Existing just as human thoughts. Or a baby in the womb. That is, a form which would unveil only that which can be unveiled, the rest remaining in darkness.”⁵ The poet describes the moment he hit upon the idea as a kind of illumination:

The solution occurred to me unexpectedly – it was a true revelation, an almost mystical vision of the Word growing into all directions and developing into an enormous text. I saw a word from whose letters there emerged new words, and then some more words emanated out of those, and more, and further words, and further more... And then I saw how all those words coil up backwards, like the Kundalini serpent: the visible layer of the text loses all the letters but initials, which form the lower layer of the text, then a new layer is revealed in an analogous way, and yet another, until the Word that gave rise to that whole, overwhelming, Chinese-box structure. I felt a bit like Alice after she had drunk the potion, folding like a telescope that was able to see the very moment of the Big Bang. Finally, I saw all those layers, all those times and spaces coexisting there at the same time, and I realised that the problem of an inability to convey simultaneous messages ceased to exist.⁶

⁴ Of course, Fajfer’s thinking is based on alphabetic notation. But one could possibly imagine a similar process and method of writing in other systems of notation, e.g., in which components of an ideographic sign would be used as triggers for the emanational text.

⁵ Z. Fajfer, *dwadzieścia jeden liter / ten letters*, ed. and trans. K. Bazarnik, animation of the CD J. Woynarowski, Kraków 2010, p. 41.

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 36–37.

The emanational form was first used in *Oka-leczenie*, a book Fajfer wrote jointly with Katarzyna Bazarnik,⁷ to render the consciousnesses of a dying man and a baby to be born. Their streams of consciousness remain inaccessible to the people accompanying the comatose patient and the infant. But the readers can access them by decoding the hidden texts, thereby acting as if he or she were a guide for the departing soul, and a midwife helping to deliver the baby. However, if the reader refrains from performing this action, both heroes will be in a state of suspension between life and death: the dying man lingering in a kind of bardo, and the child remaining in the state of potentiality (this in-betweenness is graphically represented in the middle codex of the unconventionally bound book; see Fig. 1). Therefore, the work itself can be described as “an enduring whole” whose *telos*, however, has not yet been realised. It remains in potency until the process of setting the emanational texts in motion is realised by a reader.



Fig. 1. *Oka-leczenie*: a triple dos-à-dos forming a kind of leporello; the texts in outer codices have the emanational form.

Fajfer’s programmatic poem “Ars poetica” illustrates how these states of textual potentiality and actuality can be observed in different media. The poem was originally written in Polish in 2004 and co-translated by Fajfer and Bazarnik into English in 2005. The translation prioritises the emanational

⁷ *Oka-leczenie* and its sequel, *(O)patrzenie*, are classified as liberature (Pol. *liberatura*), a literary genre integrating text with the material form of the book. Its name was coined by Fajfer, who hybridised Latin “liber” (book) with “literature” to stress their organic unity, and his idea was picked up by some literary scholars to describe similar works. To read more on liberature, see Z. Fajfer, *Liberature or Total Literature. Collected Essays 1999–2009*, ed. and trans. K. Bazarnik, Kraków 2010; and *eadem*, *Liberature: A Book-Bound Genre*, Kraków 2016.

form, since the aim was to preserve its entelechical potential. Thus, due to the formal constraint of the emanational form, rather than rendering the meanings of the “surface” text, the translators recreated the multi-layered acrostic, while trying as much as possible, to impart similar imagery, metaphors and motifs. Even before the poem was published in print, the interactivity and potential movement intrinsic to the emanational form inspired the poet to animate the text on the screen. The Flash versions, in Polish and English, were prepared in collaboration with programmer Marcin Lewandowski and presented during the 5th Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature in Krakow in March 2005.⁸ Two years later these kinetic electronic versions of “Ars Poetica” were published in *Techsty*,⁹ a portal of electronic literature, and soon after anthologised in the third *Electronic Literature Collection*.¹⁰ In 2010, Fajfer included the poem in his bilingual volume *dwadzieścia jeden liter / ten letters* where its printed form opens the book, and its animated version begins “Primum Mobile,”¹¹ a series of three kinetic emanational poems on the DVD included in the volume as its integral component.

As can be seen in *dwadzieścia jeden liter / ten letters*, in the static, print version of “Ars Poetica,” it is the readers who need to uncover the invisible layers of text in a truly “nontrivial effort.”¹² In the electronic one, their effort is reduced to a mere click of the button that launches (or pauses) the automatic process of involution and evolution of the text on the screen. The kinetic “Ars Poetica” demonstrates how the text infolds into one word “it,” and it unfolds back into its full shape. It shows how every letter is set in motion in order to actualise the text’s potency due to which the poem attains its proper shape (*eidōs* or *morphē*). Thus it can be argued that “Ars poetica” has two modes of being rather than just two modes of presentation (or two different interfaces): “staying-itself” and “being-at work.” It exists simultaneously as potentiality and its actualisation, or the *entelechy* of “it” (or possibly even the lyrical “I”).

⁸ The kinetic “Primum Mobile” was premiered on October 27, 2005 in Poznań during an exhibition of Fajfer’s works “Slowa/Words,” curated by Małgorzata Dawidek Grylicka in “Enter” Gallery, accompanying a colloquium on literature and visual texts. The digital animation of the poems in Polish and in English versions (using Adobe software: After Effects, Photoshop, Premiere) was created by Jakub Woynarowski for *ten letters* in 2010.

⁹ Since Flash is no longer supported by Adobe, and web browsers have removed all Flash-related software, the poem is no longer available on *Techsty*.

¹⁰ Z. Fajfer, “Ars poetica”, [in:] *Electronic Literature Collection 3*, eds. S. Boluk, et al., Cambridge, Mass. 2016, <https://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=ars-poetica> (accessed: 4.06.2023).

¹¹ Incidentally, the title of this mini-cycle of kinetic emanational poems alludes to Aristotle’s “unmoved” or “prime mover”, the immobile cause of all motion and change in the universe (cf. *Oxford Reference* online).

¹² Cf. Aarseth’s definition of ergodic literature. E.J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore 1997, p. 1.

Fajfer frequently uses the emanational method in his work, especially to pursue the theme of visibility versus invisibility. In his bottle-book-poem *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę*¹³ (*Detect Ozone Whole Nearby*), the text is printed on a transparent plastic sheet and placed in an empty vodka bottle (see Fig. 2). The transparency of the “cover” and of the material carrier of the text suggests that the poem is fully exposed to the curious eyes of its beholders, as if nothing remained to be hidden. However, the first challenge the poem poses is mere legibility: it is not easy to read this “message in a bottle.” Its unconventional materiality inhibits or even frightens some readers away from pulling the plastic scroll from its container (as I have often seen during workshops on liberature). The transparent sheet requires some support if one wants to *see* the text: it either needs to be held against a window or a white background. The difficulty is further exacerbated by the fact that the poem contains emanational sub-texts. So the opening stanza sounds rather ironic:

Wind-up. Eyelids
 Ocluded. Veils ever re-veiled?
 Monitoring inside monitors inside cameras
 But every yell of nightly destiny¹⁴



Fig. 2. *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę* (Detect Ozone Whole Nearby, 2nd ed.)

¹³ Literally, the title means “Looking through an ozone hole”. Z. Fajfer, *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę*, Kraków 2003.

¹⁴ I quote from the English translation by Finn Fordham, Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer, which retains the emanational structure of the original. It features in “Primum Mobile”, the kinetic series of poems on CD in Z. Fajfer’s *dwadzieścia jeden liter / ten letters*.

In this see-through object, little is “unveiled” or uncovered from the start. When its “veils” and “eyelids” are finally lifted, that is, the sub-texts decoded, “transmediation,” signalled in the beginning, occurs:

Transvaluations: holograms erupt
Everywhere. Prisoners initiate liberation. Out! Glasses up! Enjoy
New ozone... When
Dreams entrance, smithereens interanimate random events.

Self-reflexively, the poem announces its remediation. Indeed, some time later, Fajfer remediated it into an animation in part three of the above-mentioned “Primum Mobile.” But there is nothing random about it. In its kinetic form, the poem remains strictly controlled by the original notarikon-like design. The movement of the letters is not generated randomly by software, but proceeds towards completion according to the thoughtfully envisaged plan, illustrating vividly how “thinghood and being at work merge into the single idea of being at work staying itself (*entelecheia*).”¹⁵

Developing the emanational poetics, Fajfer has created an even more elaborate textual structure. His next book, entitled *Powieki*¹⁶ (2013), is a multimodal cycle of intricately interconnected poems. Again, its format embraces the printed volume and the accompanying CD. In this collection, all poems except one have the emanational structure. What is more, its five parts are interconnected to form several larger networks. The first letters of titles within each part form words: ZENKASI,¹⁷ ZARODKI (*embryos*), OKNA (*windows*). The initial letters of the poems in part I, entitled “Sonetrix,” spell MIKROSTRUKTURA (*microstructure*). Moreover, the penultimate layers of the “folded” emanational poems in the Sonetrix cycle rhyme according to the Petrarchan sonnet’s rhyme scheme.

The printed book closes with “NOKTUR-n” (*nocturn*), the only non-emanational poem which breaks off abruptly in the middle of the word “mie/szkanie” (“apart/ment”), leaving out the remaining syllables (*cf.* Fig. 3). “NOKTUR-n” is then reprinted on the CD, thereby suggesting that the missing part of the final word should be sought in the digital version. When the electronic collection is played,¹⁸ the reader watches the animation in which the missing

¹⁵ J. Sachs, *Aristotle’s Physics...*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

¹⁶ The title means ‘eyelids,’ but also a pun on ‘for ever’ (Pol. po wieki). Z. Fajfer, *Powieki*, Szczecin 2013.

¹⁷ The compound referring to the author’s and his wife’s names, used as their artistic *nome de plume*.

¹⁸ The electronic, hypertextual version of *Powieki* has been also published in *Techsty*, and is included in *Electronic Literature Collection 4*, eds. K.I. Berens, et al., Electronic Literature Organization 2022.

syllables of the broken word: “-szkanie” appear on the screen (see Fig. 4, 5 and 6). Its letters are moving in an anagrammatic dance, their movement accompanied by insistent knocking on the door and the ringing of a doorbell.

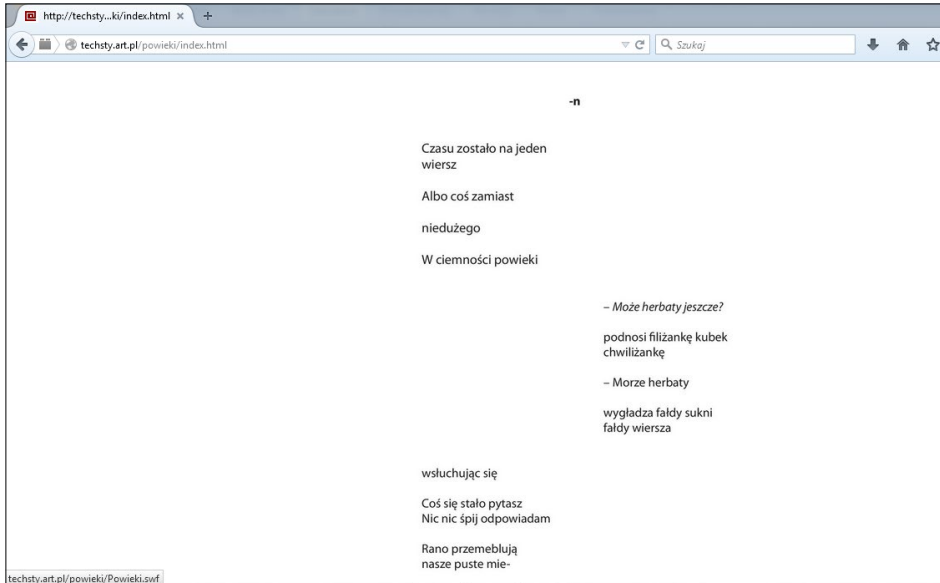


Fig. 3. “NOKTUR-n,” the final, non-emanational poem of the printed *Powieki*, opens its hypertextual version. Note the final word broken in the middle: “mie-”.

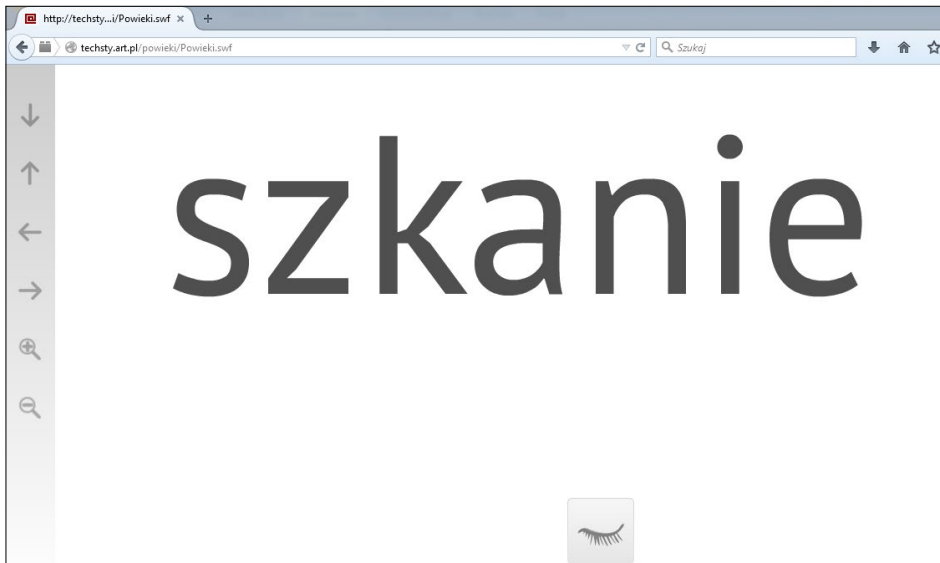


Fig. 4. The missing syllables of “NOKTUR-n”.

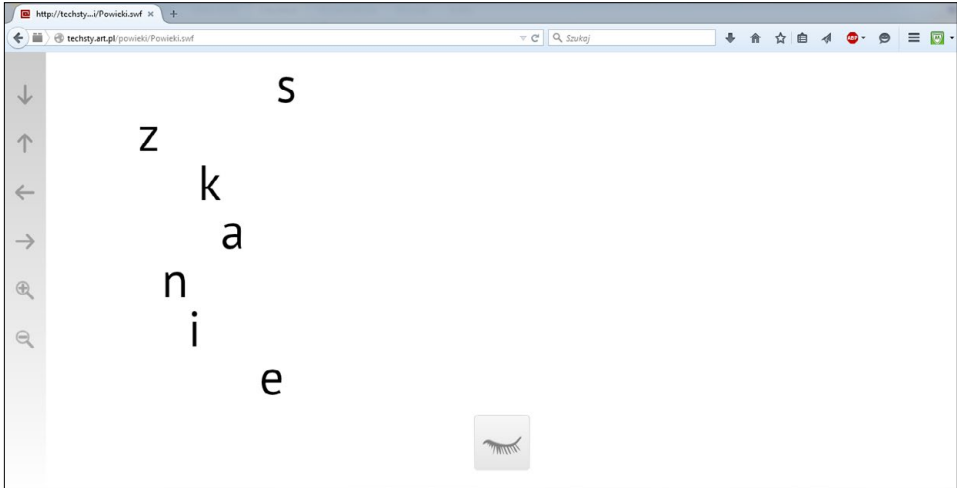


Fig. 5. A screenshot of the letters of “-szkanie” moving across the screen; the soundtrack for the animation includes knocking on the door, a ringing doorbell and a telephone ringing.

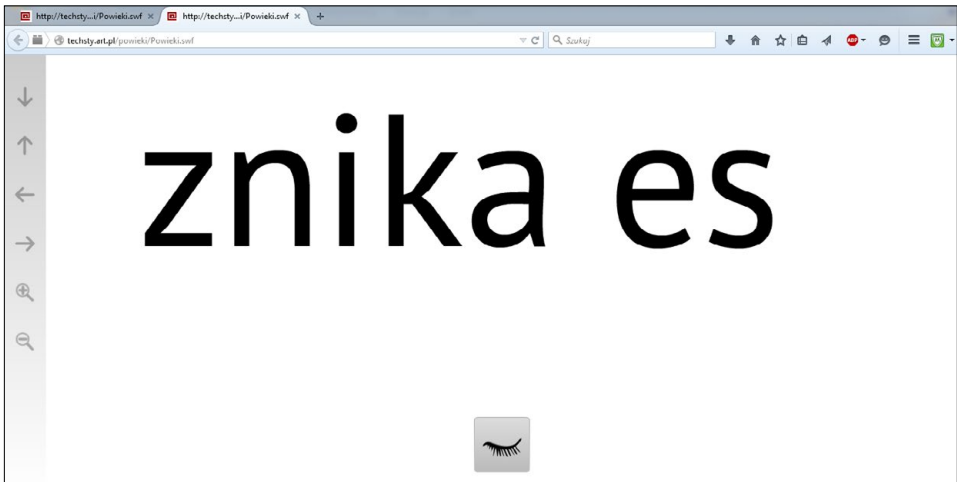


Fig. 6. A momentary freeze of the moving letters: the phrase means “Es disappears,” and the “eye” icon is active (indicated by its black color).

In order to access the kinetic poems, one needs to click on the icon of the eye. The entrance is activated only temporarily, when the moving letters momentarily freeze, forming a full word or phrase; this is indicated by the change of the eyelid color from gray to black (see Fig. 6). When the eyelid icon is grayed, it is deactivated and the hypertext cannot be entered. The animated hypertext of *Powieki* can be accessed through several different “entrances,” depending on a different anagram. Inside the hypertext, the

readers can move upwards and downwards, left and right, clicking on arrows in the panel on the left, as well as traversing different levels, choosing occasional hyperlinks hidden in some selected words of the poems. By doing so they can follow paths, passages and connections between poems that are not flagged typographically in any way in the printed book. But they are not random, since the hyperlinked words are recognizable as important leitmotifs across Fajfer's poetic *oeuvre*. In this way, the digital counterpart realises the potential of intertextuality latent in the printed book. It can be understood as "Kristevan intertextuality [...] not a mosaic, or a limitless web of deferred meanings, but a logical relationship of 'X and/or not X', an 'an(d)other',"¹⁹ even more relevant to Fajfer's poetics due to his exploitation of anagrams.²⁰

Mariusz Pisarski, who reviewed the book in *Techsty*, remarks that *Powieki* constitutes an almost optimal kind of hypertext, containing temporal, conditional and many other kinds of hyperlinks (par. 4). It is worth stressing that such richness of link types ensues from the work's literary form, i.e. its multidimensional, emanational structure, although Fajfer did not rely on any ready-made hypertextual solutions.²¹ The formally intricate organisation of discourse may be interpreted as a diagrammatic icon, intended to simulate an experience of wandering through a complicated, multi-storeyed labyrinth, with movable walls, following potentially infinite paths.²² Looking for textual hints, the reader as if gropes for clues indicating a way out of the underground maze.

The motif of *katabasis* is enhanced by several allusions to the mythical underworld, for example, Kore,²³ asphodel meadows (i.e. Elysium), Eden, Avalon,²⁴ and Orpheus.²⁵ The interdiction addressed to the mythological musician is literally repeated as a single-line poem in the printed part of *Powieki* entitled "Oysters":

()

Nie odwracaj się²⁶

¹⁹ M. Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*, Cambridge 2003, p. 32.

²⁰ Scarlett Baron notes that among Kristeva's inspirations, when she was working out her theory of intertextuality, was de Saussure's private studies of anagrams in Latin poetry, published by Jean Starobinsky as *Les Mots sous les mots* in 1971. S. Baron, *The Birth of Intertextuality: The Riddle of Creativity*, New York and London 2020, p. 315.

²¹ P. Marecki, *Między kartką a ekranem. Cyfrowe eksperymenty z medium książki w Polsce*, Kraków 2018, p. 160.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 161.

²³ Z. Fajfer, *Powieki*, *op. cit.*, 2013, p. 52.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

In the book, the line “Nie odwracaj się,” i.e. “Don’t look back,” constitutes the penultimate poem in the collection, and the last emanational text. It is followed by the above mentioned “NOKTUR-n,” describing an empty apartment abandoned by lovers, as if alluding to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. With this poem, the book ends – the journey through the underworld is over. The ancient myth tells us that Orpheus did turn back, thereby closing off the opportunity to re-enter the other world and to bring his beloved back to life, that is, to re-animate her.

But since “NOKTUR-n” is reprinted on the disc, Fajfer offers his readers another chance. The poem functions as a transition to the virtual space of the kinetic hypertext. When the CD is played, we can hear insistent knocking on the door and the upsetting ringing of a doorbell, as if suggesting that a desperate lover is trying to break through the locked gates of Hades. If the reader notices and follows the active icon, the entry into the textual maze of *Powieki* will open to them.

But the electronic hypertext is not a straightforward, animated equivalent of the poems. It is richer as it hides some “Easter eggs,” namely, links leading to texts not included in the printed book. They are accessible via certain carefully selected words or phrases, such as the words “okno” (window) and “drzwi” (“door”). Upon clicking them, color and sound appear in the otherwise black and silent texts; moreover, the poems revealed here are more lyrical and cheerful in tone. They describe peaceful moments spent with the persona’s beloved, drinking Earl Grey tea, watching romantic films, reading poetry together. One can notice how some letters turn green, brown or blue, and listen to the chirping of birds, the cries of gulls, and the murmur of the sea (see Fig. 7, 8 and 9).

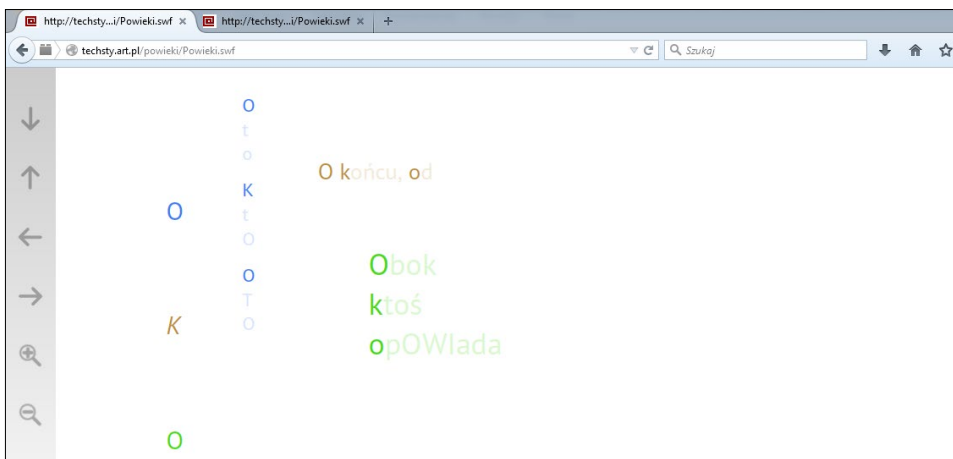


Fig. 7. A screen shot of one of the “windows” (or an “Easter egg”) in *Powieki*.

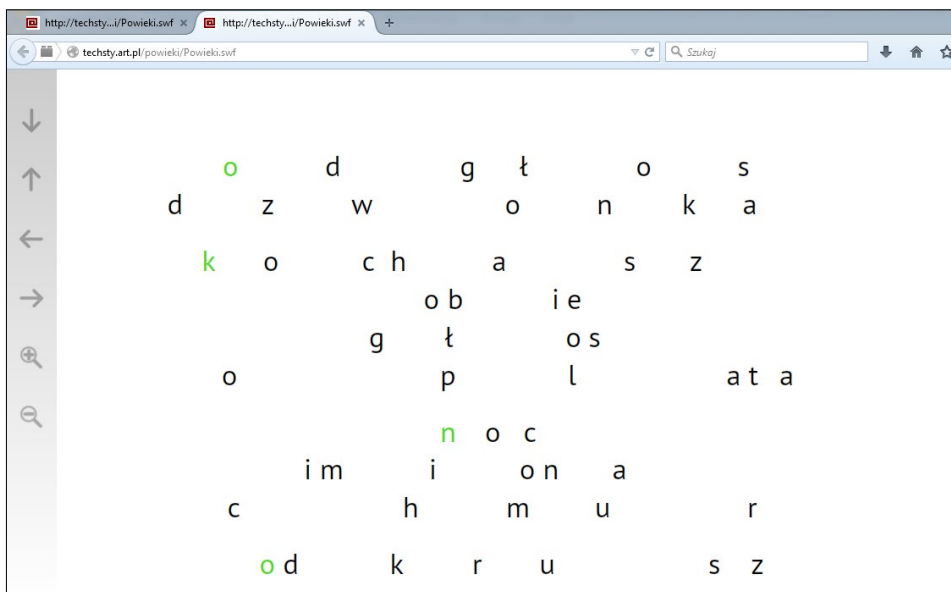


Fig. 8. A screen shot of another “window” (or an “Easter egg”) in *Powieki*.

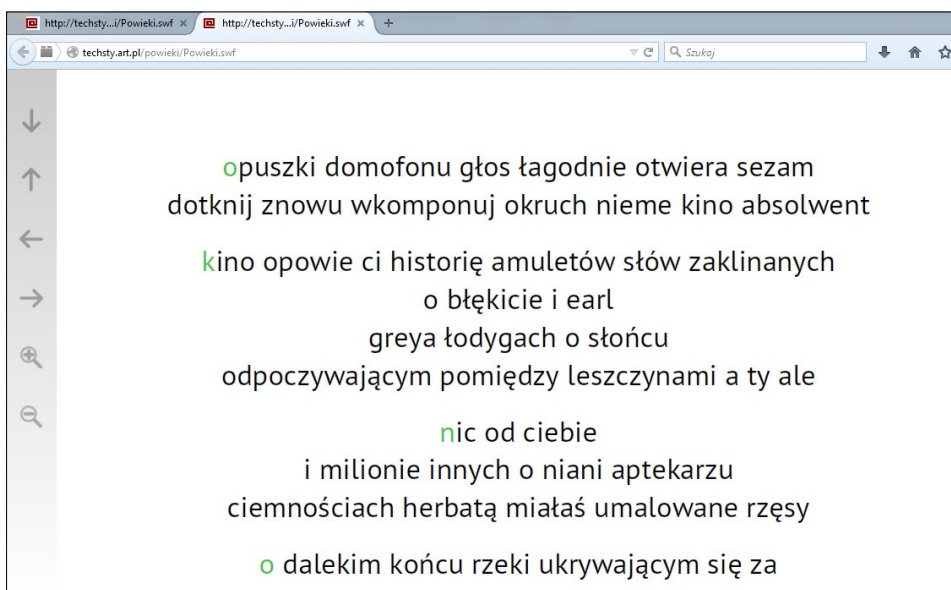


Fig. 9. A screen shot of another “window” (or an “Easter egg”) in *Powieki*.

These are also moments when the pace and direction of reading cannot be controlled. The “Easter egg” poems appear on the screen and immediately

fade away, as if to remind the readers of transitoriness and uncontrollability of life. This also throws into stark relief the readers' experience of transitions between other lexias. Getting used to moving between textual levels at their own speed, the readers may be surprised that now they are denied control. Despite that, they are still given ample time to read the unfolding and infolding "window" poems, so one does not experience frustration accompanying the reading of quickly flashing kinetic text.

So, *Powieki* invites contemplation and slow, close reading, as if to exemplify Jessica Pressman's call to return to this practice in critiquing electronic literature, presented in *Digital Modernism*.²⁷ As Mariusz Pisarski stresses in his review, *Powieki* is "an oasis of zen in the world of hysterical discourses, offering us a verbal therapy on the liberatic couch, the more valuable as it is carried out by the same liquid crystal display that usually attacks us with its chaotic scream" (par. 7, transl. by the author). Piotr Marceki makes a similar observation with regard to Fajfer's work. He points out that perhaps "the greatest paradox" is

his ability to use the digital media in such a way as to slow down the perception of text and offer [us] deep reading (which seems to go against the very logic and nature of these media). What's more, this happens thanks to the tools afforded by them (such as hypertext and kinetic art), but only providing that the audience learns new modes of reading, or rather relearns the ones already eradicated by culture. And though his texts feature unfavourable comments on the new technologies [...], it seems that Fajfer himself creates the digital media and masters them. Not the other way round.²⁸

Therefore, Fajfer's work realises little expected potency of these media by counteracting the readerly ADHD usually fostered by the digital environment, reminding us that poetry on the screen can and needs to be savoured, too. One way of doing this consists in his use of the lyrical, multimodal "Easter egg" poems discussed above, activated by single words. Another method is to activate self-citations. The poem "Kamery" (Cmeras)²⁹ includes the line "spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę" [looking through the ozone hole; or in the acrostical translation: detect ozone whole nearby], which repeats the title of Fajfer's bottle-book (see Fig. 10). In the printed book, the reader familiar with Fajfer's work may spot this auto-allusion, or to use Katarzyna Biela's term, an instance of auto-textuality,³⁰ and perhaps

²⁷ J. Pressman, *Digital Modernism: Writing It New in New Media*, Oxford 2014, pp. 18–22.

²⁸ P. Marceki, *op. cit.*, p. 163 (trans. by the author).

²⁹ Z. Fajfer, *Powieki*, *op. cit.*, 2013, p. 35.

³⁰ K. Biela, *Encounters in Theatre and Literature: B.S. Johnson and Zenon Fajfer*. PhD dissertation, Jagiellonian University in Krakow 2022, p. 193.

recall the bottled poem. In the electronic version, he or she can follow the link and display the poem at this point (see Fig. 11 and 12).

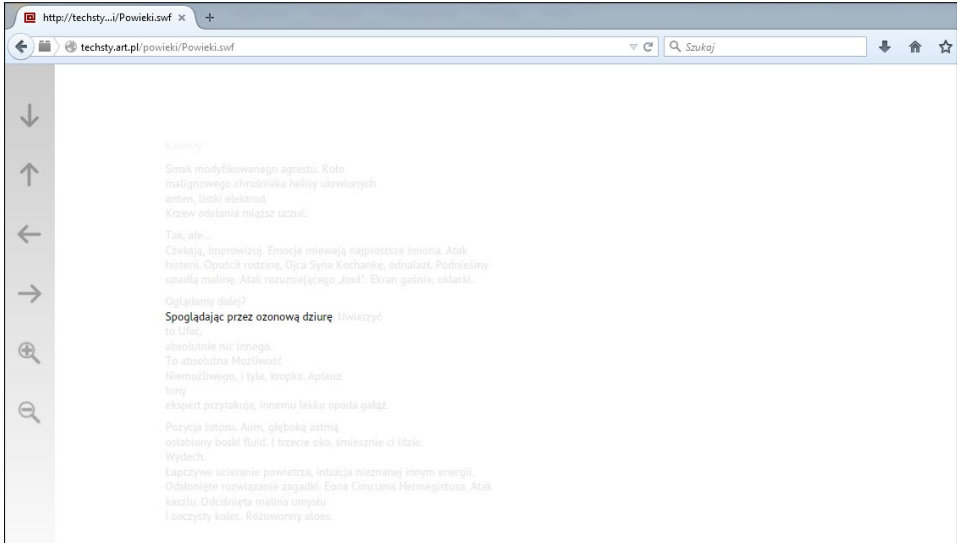


Fig. 10. The poem “Kamery” with an active link to the kinetic e-version of “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę”.

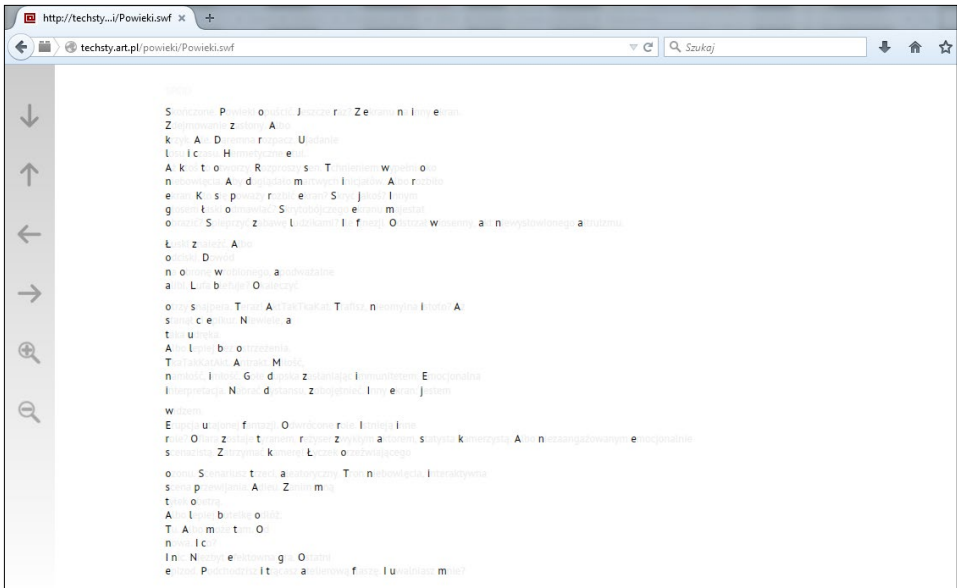


Fig. 11. The text of “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę”; the screenshot of the stage when the surface layer is fading away to disclose the first “invisible” text.

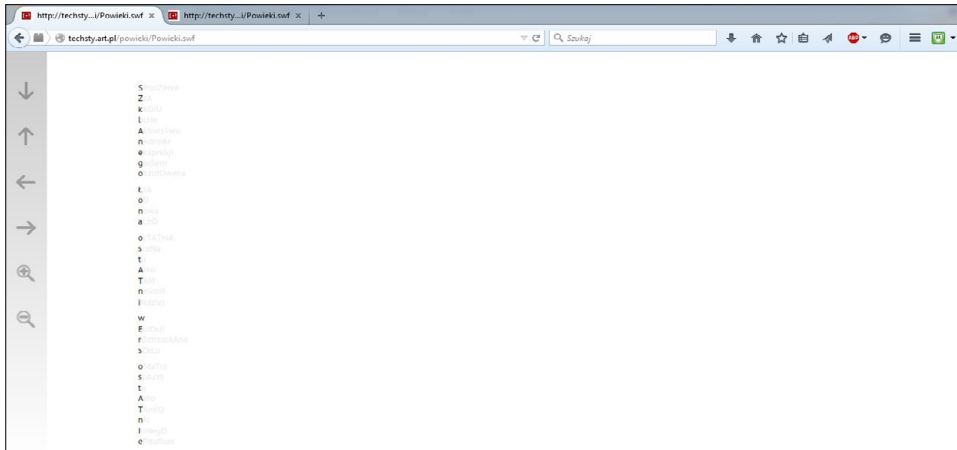


Fig. 12. The screenshot of the first and second layers of “invisible” texts in “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę”.

At this point it is tempting to quote Roland Barthes’ reflection:

We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.

Although Fajfer’s filiation is with Aristotle rather than the 20th-century thinker, *Powieki* is full of tension between the principle of Aristotelian *entelechy* and the Barthesian claim that

[i]n a multiple writing, indeed, everything is to be distinguished, but nothing deciphered; structure can be followed, “threaded” (like a stocking that has run) in all its recurrences and all its stages, but there is no underlying ground; the space of the writing is to be traversed, not penetrated: writing ceaselessly posits meaning but always in order to evaporate it: it proceeds to a systematic exemption of meaning. Thus literature (it would be better, henceforth, to say writing), by refusing to assign to the text (and to the world as text) a “secret:” that is, an ultimate meaning, liberates an activity which we might call counter-theological, properly revolutionary, for to refuse to arrest meaning is finally to refuse God and his hypostases, reason, science, the law.³¹

Indeed, one can easily get lost in the labyrinthine sliding surfaces of Fajfer’s collection. When “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę” is followed further to the “bottom” word, one discovers that the piece does not end with

³¹ R. Barthes, *Death of the Author*, [in:] *The Rustle of Language*, trans. R. Howard, New York 1986, pp. 53–54.

the sound of crushed glass that would lead to stasis, as is the case in “Primum Mobile”. Instead, the hyperlink leads to an invisible layer of yet another poem in which “SŁOWO,” the same “bottom” word appears (see Fig. 12, 13 and 14), and the reader can continue their journey. In this way, Fajfer seems to illustrate the principle of intertextuality: that every word is in fact “borrowed” from another earlier text, and constitutes a nexus or intersection of other texts.

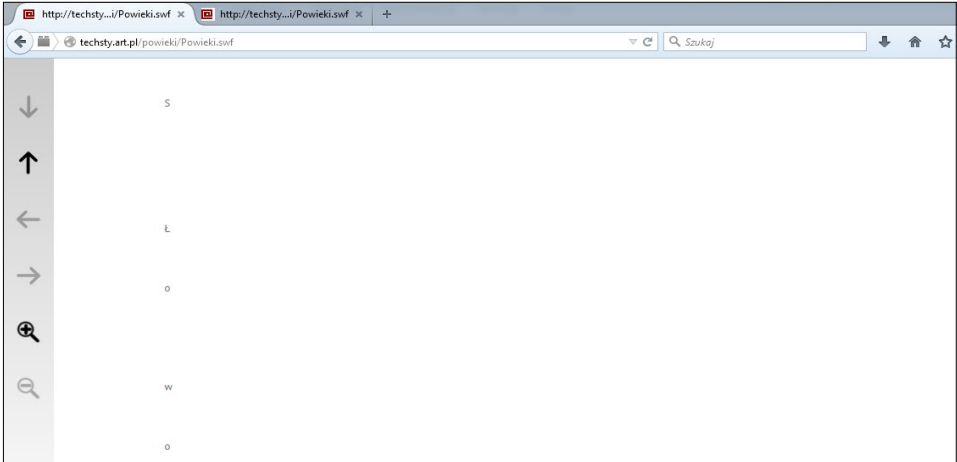


Fig. 13. The screenshot of “SŁOWO” (*word*), the “bottom” word of “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę”.

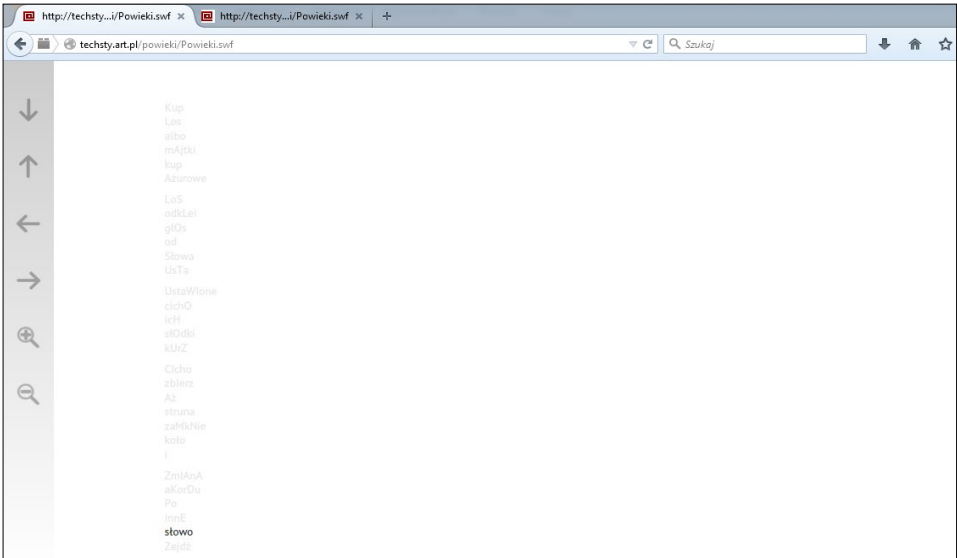


Fig. 14. The screenshot of “SŁOWO”, the “bottom” word of “Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę” appearing in a different poem.

But, admittedly, smashing of broken glass can be also heard in the e-version of *Powieki*. Predictably, it occurs when the reader breaks the mythical interdiction “Don’t look back” by following the arrow pointing to the right (Fig. 15). In consequence, the unidirectional link leads them to a screen in which the letters of the sentence are scattered across the surface, accompanied by the sound of steps on broken glass. When the screen is darkening, a white crack in the black background reveals fragments of “NOKTUR-n” (see Fig. 16, 17, 18). Disobeying the divine law has led to the “dead end” of Fajfer’s hypertextual *Powieki* – the game’s over.

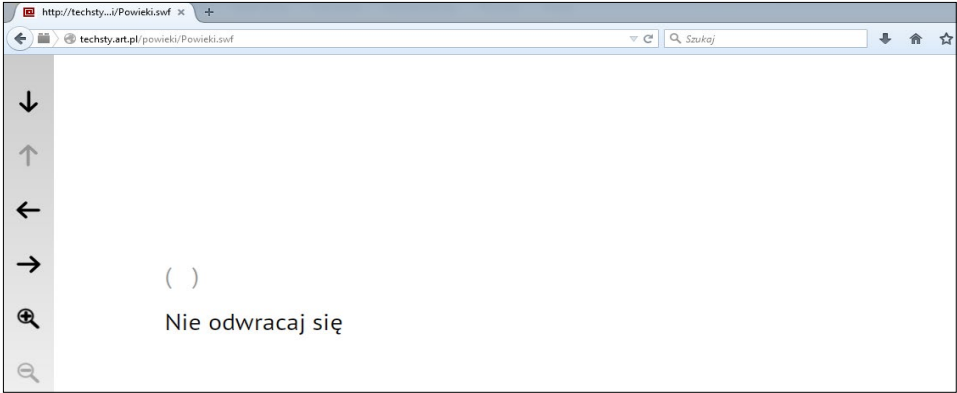


Fig. 15. The potentially “fatal” place in hypertextual part of *Powieki*. Following the right arrow leads to a non-reversible sequence of animations ending in a hypertextual “cul-de-sac”.

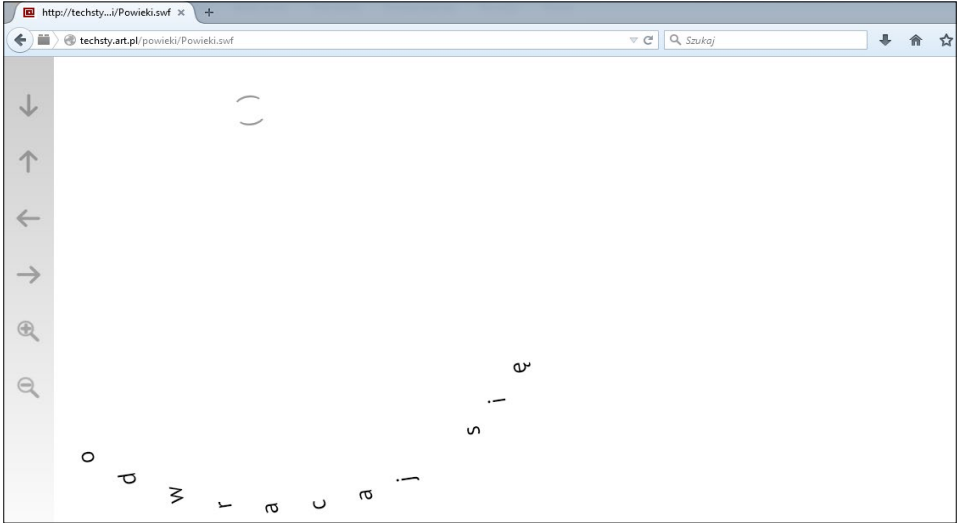


Fig. 16. The interdiction at the moment of “breaking”; in the background one can hear the sound of crushing glass.

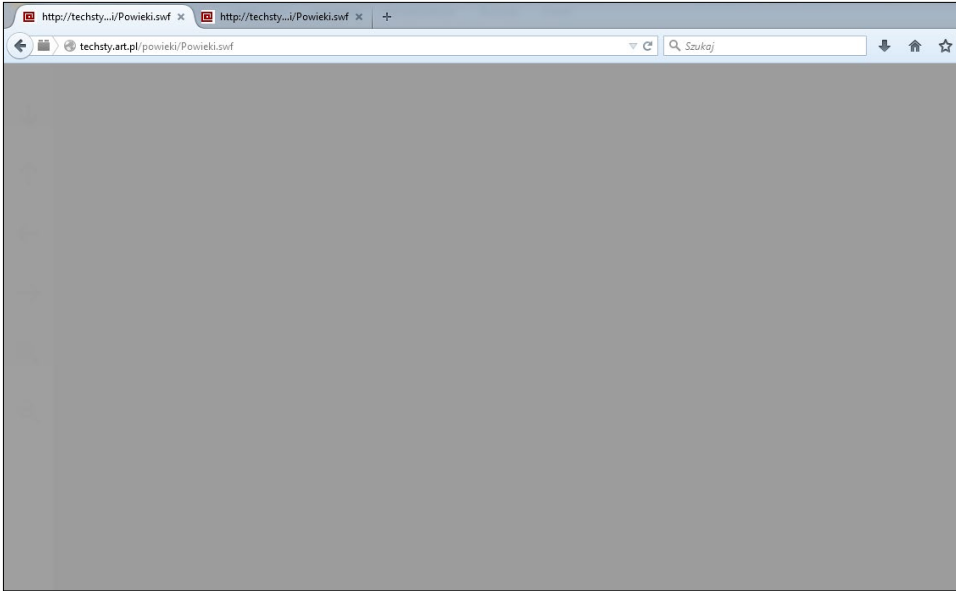


Fig. 17. The darkening screen following the breaking of the “interdiction”.

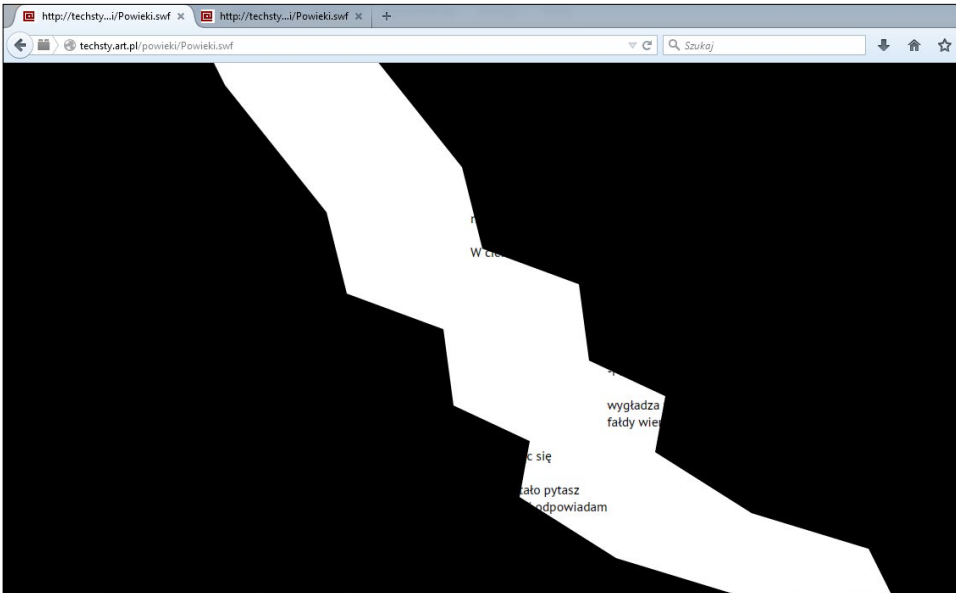


Fig. 18. A crack in the black screen; the “dead end” of hypertextual *Powieki*.

It remains an open question, subject to interpretation, whether at this point Fajfer’s emanational, hypertextual work reaches its *entelechy*, or

whether the reader is chastised for failing to recognize the allusion to (if not plain quotation from) the Orphic myth. The possibility of ceaseless movement is built into the structure of the digital *Powieki*; the structure of the printed book inevitably leads to the reader turning the final page and concluding their reading with the last non-emanational “NOKTUR-n.” By granting his audience the possibility of completing the missing syllable of the poem, as well as the possibility to explore the e-collection, the poet foregrounds the ambiguous nature of writing and reading, which resists closure, and continues “po wieki” (for ever).

Finally, it is also worth noticing how Fajfer’s work is related to processual media theory proposed by Ned Rossiter. In particular, *Powieki*, with its “larger than book” emanational, potentially kinetic spaces, exemplifies features of the network described by the scholar:

The network is not “decomposable into constituent points” [50]. That is what a non-reflective and non-reflexive empirics of new media, of informational economies and network societies, in its reified institutional mode attempts to do. The network is not a “measurable, divisible space.” Rather, it holds a “nondecomposable” dimension that always exceeds – or better, subsists within – what in the name of non-reflexive empirics are predetermined regimes of quantification, which, as Brian Massumi has it, “is an emergent quality of movement” [50]. This is not to say that things never occupy a concrete space. An analytics of space (and time), if it is to acknowledge the complexity of things, cannot take as its point of departure the state of arrest of things. Instead, attention needs to take a step back (or perhaps a step sideways, and then back within), and inquire into the preconditions of stasis.³²

Fajfer’s poetry collection occupies “a concrete space”, which in its dual form of the printed book and the CD appears as if it were “measurable, divisible”. However, when its emanational structure is properly analysed, its “emergent quality of movement” can be activated in ergodic reading in both the printed and the digital media. Despite being a seemingly static set of objects, it defies a kind of “deadness” and closure traditionally ascribed to the codex.³³ The emanational form hints at and invites the readers to notice the book’s potential, its affordances,³⁴ and plays them against the

³² N. Rossiter, *Processual Media Theory*, [in:] *Proceedings of the Fifth International Digital Arts and Culture Conference*, RMIT, Melbourne, Australia, May 19–23, 2003, <http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/dac/papers/Rossiter.pdf> (accessed: 16.08.2015), p. 168.

³³ Cf. for example, Jacques Derrida’s “The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing” in *Of Grammatology* (trans. G.C. Spivak, Baltimore 1976, pp. 77–93) and Louis Armand’s *Technē. James Joyce, Hypertext & Technology* (Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philologica, Monographia 139, Prague 2003).

³⁴ William Gaver explains how such a process can happen: “People perceive the environment directly in terms of its potentials for action, without significant intermediate stages

affordances of the hypertext. The printed book may become a subject of the readers' active manipulation: rereading, decoding of emanational layers of text and possibly writing them down, of mental hyperlinking, even without a resort to its digital version, whereas engaging with the electronic version reveals another textual time-space, and sets off processes and network nodes potentially pre-existing in the work's static form. In fact, it can be argued that Fajfer's book of emanations gives rise to print-born digital hypertexts and activates potentialities entailed in the matter(iality) of the writing in both media, the old and the new.

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involving memory or inferences. [...] An affordance of an object, such as one for climbing, refers to attributes of both the object and the actor.”

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Katarzyna Bazarnik – Joyce scholar, translator and co-author of liberatic books, professor in the Institute of English Studies at Jagiellonian University, member of the Jagiellonian University Avant-Garde Research Center OBAWA, co-founder, with Zenon Fajfer, of the Liberature Reading Room (now at the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow). She is the author of *Joyce and Liberature* (2011) and *Liberature. A Book-bound Genre* (2016), editor and co-editor of volumes of essays on the multimodality and materiality of literature and the poetics of the avant-garde, as well as monographic issues of *Literatura na Świecie*, a literary magazine on translated literatures, devoted to the works of Joyce and B.S. Johnson. ORCID: 0000-0003-2629-6850. E-mail address: <k.bazarnik@uj.edu.pl>.