

Literature as an Entangled World

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The editorial discusses the volume's assumptions and goals by briefly characterizing the covered issues (digital archive, liberature, literary reading of history, literary entanglement, relationships between literature, film, the theater, and video games) conceptualized in various research perspectives. The problem of the role of applying operational notions, such as re-enactment, remixability, indeterminacy, possibility, potentiality, virtuality, etc., which are used in attempts at creating a new onto-epistemology, are also considered. Therefore, literature is a constant performative re-enactment of the process of making the entangled world present. In this process, literature constantly reestablishes the world of different possibilities of existing.

KEYWORDS: digital archive, history, liberature, literary entanglement, film, theater, video games, re-enactment, remixability, possibility, potentiality, virtuality, performativity, undefined world

There is no simple, encyclopedic answer to the question how the modern notion of literature is understood. Literature eludes even the most sophisticated attempts at defining its constant characteristics and ways of conceptualizing its stable character. In the call for papers for this volume we wrote:

Our aim is to identify 21st-century transformations in literary studies, especially those concerning the image of the studied subject. Those transformations can be roughly summarized as a transition from static and definition-like description strategies towards more dynamic models conceptualizing the subject of the analysis in action; a transition from conceptualizations treating literature as an artifact, the art of the word largely connected to the print era, to concepts allowing and project literature to be discovered as a kind of dramaturgy showing different formulas and manifestations not only in relation to new media, but also to new categories highlighting potentiality, uncertainty, indefiniteness, possibility.

We would like to reveal areas for potential future research, as well as showing the future work of potentiality. For instance, instead of changeable methodologies – dramaturgy; instead of descriptive notions (exhaustive, or at least striving towards a synthesis) – operative notions (individually adjusted to the processually characterized object of analysis); and instead of the binary way of thinking – performativity. Presented in this way, literature as a possibility seems to be a space defined through a set of constantly renegotiated vectors, such as the field of instability and heterogeneity, in which it is not (or – not only) meaning that is significant, but first and foremost (or – also) activities which take place in that field by actors acting within it.

The texts comprising the present volume merely outline the research project; they are an opening to a problem, but at the same time, they provoke further study of similar topics. If I were to identify some directions of literary activities discussed here, I would say that they rarely appear in their pure forms – typically, they are entangled in new openings, and they provoke innovative references while becoming accidentally entangled. On the one hand, by looking back, we discover unexpected dimensions of the future, as showcased by Stanisław Wyspiański’s digital archive – highlighting two characteristics of his work: multimedia and the dynamics of the creative process suspending finality – which becomes a comment on the present day (Magdalena Popiel). Historical texts reveal possibilities of literary interpretations, arranging new narratives/versions/images analyzed from the perspective of literary studies, in which history becomes possible literature (Piotr Bering). Zenon Fajfer’s original, interactive formula of an “emanative poem” is presented in the light of the Aristotelean concept of entelechy; the multimodal collection of emanative poems, *Powieki*, published as a material book and digital poems released on a CD, inspires hypertext entelechy, whereas the dense, multi-level textual maze can be perceived as a modern version of the Orphic catabasis (Katarzyna Bazarnik).

The notion of “aura,” introduced by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s, is a useful category concerning ways of presenting concealment, mystery, and secrets in literature. Here, Andrzej Denka analyzes and modernizes it in his analysis of Sigfried Lenz’s novella *A Minute’s Silence*, which shows a secret as an axis of the strategy of literary criticism defining the role of form and context in personal, each time different, receptions of the story.

The changing sense of the limits of truth/fiction stimulates perceiving writing/reading as performative acts. Overcoming the text-centric optics, both in the creative process, and in experiencing poetry, an insight into the achievements of performative acting, or using the artifact theory, e.g. in Brian Massumi’s conceptualization, all help construct the dramaturgy of self-cognition (Marek Pieniążek). Hence, the question about literature’s possibility also concerns the instability of an artifact, playing with text in the light of new technologies, defined as interpretative, participatory games, which take the form of games with the format or with the machine (Jacek Wachowski). Life in the world of digital media and the prospects for developing artificial intelligence is an important part of the youngest poets’ formative experience. “Imagination is rescaled”: a new poetic imagination requires readers to take a new approach to the language of the new poetry (Elżbieta Winiecka).

The papers comprising this volume focus on relationships, tangles, permeation, entanglement of many qualities, such as *Ender’s Game* by Orson

Scott Card, in reference to a video game and creation of an astroculture, together with the role of colonization and militarization motifs as actions performed by protagonists in a space which constructs the scenery of future wars (Magdalena Kempna-Pieniążek). The question of literature returns – but no longer “towards” film; instead, we are dealing with literature “as” film action (for a feature film as a literary work, see Krzysztof Kozłowski’s paper), or literature “as” theater (for conceptualizations of literature and theater in Jerzy Grotowski’s texts, see Dariusz Kosiński’s paper). The concepts of literature as a possibility of becoming a film, theater, or a video game described here, in the discussed artistic theories and practices expressed by scholars, artists, as well as scholars-artists (such as Werner Faulstich, Jerzy Grotowski, Orson Scott Card), remain a sphere of a broadly understood possibility to be two different things, simultaneously.

I believe that this is where the issue of abandoning discussions of adaptations or intersemiotic translations in favor of notions such as a palimpsest,¹ anamorphosis, re-enactment,² remixability,³ entanglement⁴ returns. Even notions which enjoyed popularity until recently, such as multimedia, i.e. including different media, or hybridity, i.e. combining different, recognizable elements, are increasingly being replaced by the notion of remixability – mixing, taking different ways of creating from various media, or chimerism – constructing a seemingly coherent piece, which in fact conceals different features of various entities. The category of enactment is being replaced with re-enactment, which, however, is not free from literature (although it may seem so), often treated as a stable text; it is not “breaking free from the literary yoke,” but rather a strategy, similar to recycling or a remix,⁵ interpreting archives, organizing, recreating, establishing literature rather than replaying it, or reconstructing understood as recreating some imagined original, made-up (as if it ever existed!) version of a canonical

¹ See L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, London and New York 2006, p. 33. “As a creative and interpretative transposition of a recognizable other work or works, adaptation is a kind of extended palimpsest...”

² See W. Świątkowska, *re-enactment*, Encyklopedia teatru polskiego [Encyclopedia of the Polish Theater], <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/hasla/352/re-enactment>.

³ L. Manovich, *Język nowych mediów* [The Language of New Media], trans. P. Cypryański, Warszawa 2006.

⁴ A. Krajewska, *Zwrot dramatyczny a literaturoznawstwo performatywne* [The Dramatic Turn and Performative Literary Studies], “Przestrzenie Teorii” 2012, no. 17.

⁵ See W. Świątkowska, *remiks*, Encyklopedia teatru polskiego [Encyclopedia of the Polish Theater], <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/hasla/351/remiks>. See also: W. Świątkowska, *Odprawianie Dziadów. Recykling i re-enactment jako strategie remiksu* [Performing the Forefathers: Recycling and Re-Enactment as Remix Strategies], “Teatr” 2017, no. 1.

work. Even multimodality⁶ is transforming into secondary multimodality⁷ or remixability.

The latter is a stark reminder that in the sphere of grasping literature, we do not refer to its features or media: we move straight to discussing those notions. Not only have notions started wandering (Mieke Bal), or become operational (Wolfgang Iser, Doris Bachmann-Medick), they are opalescent with meanings, constantly demanding redefinitions, they often take place within themselves in the metaphor mode, not to mention that it is metaphors that are being used in attempts at making literature present ever more frequently.

Therefore, a metaphor may in fact be a literary image of states of quantum entanglement. There is no original state, no pre-establishment, we do not know the mechanism (apart from referring to the author's imagination) behind the process in which two words, two concepts suddenly start to mutually share their characteristics with each other, resulting in a new, highly unstable quality. The interactive theory of metaphor (known from poetics) is close to such a conceptualization. If interactions were replaced with intra-action (a concept developed by Karen Barad,⁸ according to which unsettled entities, unready objects react to one another), we would receive the concept of metaphor as a performative entanglement, understood here as a constant reconfiguration of the world. From Heraclitus to Barad, from Plato to Bohr, we have the option of entities emerging from emptiness (i.e. the state preceding any ontology), we begin (or rather return to...) notions of uncertainty, indefiniteness, fluidity, performativity, entanglement... Here, the performative perspective of literary studies harmonizes with a category borrowed from quantum physics entanglement. Thanks to such an approach to discussing the worlds of Witold Gombrowicz, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett, or Tadeusz Różewicz, combining performativity with entanglement, and ontology with epistemology, we can understand the state of the trap in which we find ourselves in this indefinite, intangible, possible world (Anna Krajewska).

Such thinking redirects us to the game of notions: potentiality, virtuality, randomness, contingency,⁹ i.e. notions referring to speculative real-

⁶ A. Gibbons, *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature*, New York 2012.

⁷ M. Mazur, *Multimodalność wtórna i widzialność tomograficzna na przykładzie "Nakarmić kamień" Bronki Nowickiej* [Secondary Multimodality and Tomographic Visibility – The Example of Bronka Nowicka's Nakarmić Kamień (To Feed a Stone)], "Przestrzenie Teorii" 2023, no. 39.

⁸ K. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, London 2007.

⁹ See Q. Meillassoux, *Po skończoności: Esej o konieczności przygodności* [After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency], trans. P. Herbich, Biblioteka kwartalnika "Kronos", Warszawa 2015.

ism. In the background looms the question of literature's status expressed in various philosophical concepts – J. Hillis Miller's¹⁰ (performative seeing), Daniel Ferrer's¹¹ (possible worlds), or Quentin Meillassoux's¹² (speculative realism).

Is literature as literature an expression of potentiality? The answer is not simple, it concerns studying ways of creating literature; this question is about the possibility of reflecting simultaneity, visibility and invisibility, potentiality and actuality (Katarzyna Bazarnik). We should then ask about the possibility of theories – possible, potential, as well as theories of possibility, a theory which would seek the language of describing intangible phenomena, such as potentiality or contingency (Ewelina Woźniak-Czech).

In the present volume, we offer various perspectives on literature, without limiting ourselves to one – instead, we are trying to constantly change our position by reading and following authors. If I were to risk defining my process of experiencing literature, I would repeat what I proposed in 2012: looking at literature through the prism of quantum entanglement.¹³ Literature manifests itself as an entangled world; it becomes an entangled world of different dimensions. It is impossible to identify some original establishment (original scene) for it, because not only is it created in the author's imagination, but it also creates itself in the very process of writing – writing which corrects, transforms, interacts (and intraracts) with the author's thoughts. Literature is subject to the laws of constant remixing, understood as constantly opening new possibilities of mixed means of creating, conditions of measuring – as Witkacy would say – literature is a mixed background. Literature is a performative art, especially if we assume that performativity is entanglement. Literature is madness, constantly transgressing so-called norms and rules, beyond the world which has been defined only once. For the first time ever, new approaches to the notions of time, space, being, etc. as variables, constantly recreating themselves, conceptualized performatively, in the perspective of entanglement, have extended our understanding of literature's possibilities, they have set off cognitive processes based on onto-epistemology, and they have activated relationships between art and the laws of quantum physics. At the same time, we are returning

¹⁰ J.H. Miller, *O literaturze* [On Literature], trans. K. Hoffmann, Biblioteka "Przestrzeni Teorii", Poznań 2014.

¹¹ D. Ferrer, *Światy możliwe, światy fikcyjne, światy skonstruowane a proces genezy* [Possible Worlds, Fictional Worlds, Constructed Worlds and the Process of Genesis], trans. A. Dziadek, "Forum Poetyki" summer 2020.

¹² Q. Meillassoux, *Potencjalność i wirtualność* [Potentiality and Virtuality], "Kronos" 2012, no. 1.

¹³ A. Krajewska, *Splątanie literackie* [Literary Entanglement], "Przestrzenie Teorii" 2012, no. 17.

to eternal questions about time, space, the apparent linearity of the past/future, constant repetitions containing a difference. Therefore, literature is a constant re-enactment of the process of making the entangled world present. In that process, literature is constantly re-establishing the world of different possibilities of being. It would seem that the papers comprising this volume confirm such a possibility to a large extent.

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