Jacek Wachowski

Textual Games

The article attempts to characterize literary practices which have emerged in recent decades due to the rise of new technologies. The titular "textual games" are experiments which test the stylistic and genre durability of popular literary works. They give rise to new technological formats and new genre variations (gamebooks or works written by artificial intelligence). As such, they also create a new and unique aesthetic and formal landscape and provoke reflection on contemporary literary practices and research strategies that can be used to describe them.

KEYWORDS: word processing, literary adaptations, literature and technology, literary studies

Performance design

Anne Ubersfeld pointed out that in theatrical texts we find "matrices" of performativity (*matrices textuelles de representative*). They can be read by recipients (actors, directors, and audience members) and, even more importantly, the generic features of texts are coded in them.[1] Jerzy Ziomek wrote about similar properties of literary texts, arguing that performance design is one of the most important components of a literary work – an integral part of its genological system. However, it does not help concretize the work[2] at the level of individual reading but informs the poetics of the text and defines its genre and stylistic frameworks.[3]

---

[1] A. Ubersfeld, *Reading Theater*, trans. F. Collins, Toronto 2002, p. 8. See also S. Świontek, *Dialog – dramat – metateatr. Z problemów teorii tekstu dramatycznego* [Dialogue – Drama – Metatheatre: The Theory of the Theatrical Text], Łódź 1990, p. 105.

[2] See R. Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*, trans. G. Grabowicz, Evanston 1973, pp. 339–343 and R. Ingarden, *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. K. Olsen and R.A. Crowley, Evanston 1973, pp. 329–330; A. Chrudzimski, *Teoria intencjonalności Romana Ingardena* [Roman Ingarden's Theory of Intentionality], "Edukacja Filozoficzna" 1998, no. 25, pp. 249–250.

[3] "When we say that a text waits to be performed or that it demands to be performed, we do not mean a specific and individual performer, but a design that has the status of a role." Thus, it is not an individual representation or visualization of the represented world (concretization which takes place during individual reading) but a systemic design which contains genological and stylistic dispositions regarding performance. See J. Ziomek, *Projekty wykonawcy w dziele literackim, a problemy genologiczne* [Performance Design in a Literary Work of Art and Genological Problems], [in:] *Powinowactwa literatury. Studia i szkice*

Performance design is subject to change. It changes and transforms when the formal and stylistic aspects of a work change and transform, as seen in the, often surprising, "textual games." On the one hand, such games are nothing short of literary experiments, the purpose of which is to test the "genre durability" of a given text. On the other hand, they are also very practical, as they give rise to new formats in response to the changing communication, cognitive and aesthetic needs of recipients.

We have been playing most "textual games" for a long time. They were described in the rhetorical tradition (schemes, composition, and figures of speech)[4] and the literary tradition (intertextual transformations).[5] In recent decades, they have been aided by digital technology, giving rise to innovations[6] that transcend the standards set by analogue artistic practices.[7] In this way, literature – just like the visual, musical, or performing arts – was transformed into a field of experimentation, a laboratory in which algorithms that track readerly patterns and then create new readerly needs became the new experts and curators.

Contemporary "textual games," suspended between tradition and innovation,[8] are heading in four directions. They give rise to new readings

[Affinities of Literature: Studies and Sketches], Warszawa 1980, pp. 102–132. K. Wóycicki, quoted by Ziomek, also wrote about this phenomenon, saying that "every text contains a certain way of delivering it"; see K. Wóycicki, *Forma językowa prozy polskiej i wiersza polskiego* [The Linguistic Form of Polish Prose and Polish Verse], Warszawa 1912, p. 12. See also A. Okopień-Sławińska, *Relacje osobowe w literackiej komunikacji* [Personal Relations in Literary Communication], [in:] *Problemy Socjologii Literatury* [Problems of Sociology of Literature], ed. J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1971, pp. 109–125.

[4] Such modifications are inspired by rhetorical figures: *figurae per ordinem* (changing the syntagmatic order), *figurae per adiectionem* (adding new elements) and *figurae per detractionem* (based on subtraction). See J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa* [Descriptive Rhetoric], Wrocław 1990, pp. 200–206.

[5] See J. Kristeva, *Semiotique. Recherches pour une semanalyse*, Paris 1969 (see also J. Kristeva, *Problèmes de structuration du texte*, [in:] *Tel Quel: Théorie d'ensemble*, Paris 1968, pp. 297–316); G. Genette, *Palimpsestes. La litterature au second degre*, Paris 1982; see also M. Głowiński, *O intertekstualności* [On Intertextuality], "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1986, no. 4, p. 77. See also S. Świontek, *Dialog – dramat – metateatr*, Wrocław 1991; J. Wachowski, *Mit – dramat – tradycja. O transtekstualności w polskiej dramaturgii współczesnej* [Myth – Drama – Tradition: On Transtextuality in Contemporary Polish Drama], Poznań 1993, pp. 23–30.

[6] N. Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York 1992.

[7] *Cf.* H. Krauze-Sikorska, M. Klichowski, Świat *digital natives. Młodzież w poszukiwaniu siebie i innych* [The World of Digital Natives: Youth in Search of Themselves and Others], Poznań 2013. Many researchers emphasize that the current generation has never differed so significantly from the generation of their grandparents in terms of technological competence. These disproportions – often noticeable in the access to information and services – influence social behavior, customs, language, and value systems.

[8] See J. Białostocki, *Tradycja i innowacja* [Tradition and Innovation], [in:] *Refleksje i syntezy ze świata sztuki* [Reflections and Syntheses from the World of Art], Warszawa 1987, pp. 11–17.

(thus taking the form of "interpretation games"); they allow readers to influence the course of events and animate characters and the represented world ("participatory games"); they allow one to experiment with different media ("format games"); and they use artificial intelligence to create new works ("technological games").

Interpretation games

Interpretation games focus on the work. They reorganize its internal structure and adapt the text to new conditions of reception. The scope of such interventions is wide, ranging from adaptations that do not affect the deep structures of the original to adaptations that reorganize all levels of the work (starting with the general message, through composition, to language).[9]

An example of the former is the audio adaptation of Bolesław Prus's classic novel *The Doll* (since October 6, 2020, available as an audio series).[10] The text was modernized, that is, abridged (some dialogues and extensive descriptive parts, including Rzecki's Diary, were omitted). Also, a new plot line was added, which, according to the authors, was supposed to attract younger readers. The cast (Julia Wieniawa, Adam Woronowicz, Wiktor Zborowski, Barbara Kurdej-Szatan and Maciej Musiał) and the audio effects (recreating the "sounds" of Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century) were meant to appeal to younger audiences.

This audio series of *The Doll*, even considering some narrative changes, did not try to change the linguistic layer of the novel or its message. The remakes of the Polish classics prepared as part of the "Allegro Lektury 2.0" [Allegro School Required Reading Books 2.0] project were much more radical in their approach. The classics were reinterpreted by various artists: Mery Spolsky, who presented a new version of Bolesław Prus's "The Waistcoat"; Krzysztof Zalewski, with his interpretation of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's *The Shoemakers*; Natalia Szroeder's interpretation of

---

[9] Reorganizations refer to *inventio* as well as *dispositio* and *elocutio*. See J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa*, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–230.

[10] The project was co-financed by the National Culture Center as part of the "Digital culture" program, the aim of which was to "counter the harmful myth that school required reading books are boring and uninteresting texts." The producer's website states that the characters of the modernized *Doll* reflect current generational characteristics, and the text itself can be a metaphorical illustration of social changes, conflicts, and tensions in the modern world, see '*Lalka' Bolesława Prusa odczytana na nowo w serialu audio. Wieniawa i Woronowicz w rolach głównych* [*The Doll* by Bolesław Prus Starring Wieniawa and Woronowicz Read Anew as an Audio Series], https://news.empik.com/109861-lalka-boleslawa-prusa-odczytana-na-nowo-w-serialu-audio-wieniawa-i-woronowicz-w-rolach-glownych (accessed: 7.07.2023).

Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska's *Modlitwa* [Prayer]; Rosalie, with her interpretation of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's *Farewell to Autumn*; Ajgor Ignacy, who adapted Jan Kochanowski's *Laments*; Julia Wieniawa, and her innovative interpretation of Adam Mickiewicz's *Świtezianka* [The Nymph of Lake Switez]; Monika Brodka, and her interpretation of Bolesław Leśmian's *Gad* [Reptile]; Nadia Długosz, and her version Stanisław Wyspiański's *The Wedding*; Natasza Urbańska, and her reading of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*; and Miuosh, who reinterpreted Cyprian Kamil Norwid's poem *Czarne kwiaty. Białe kwiaty* [Black Flowers. White Flowers].[11]

These adaptations of the masterpieces of Polish literature, regardless of their genre, were constructed in a similar way. They were based on plot summaries – often told in contemporary, sometimes even colloquial, language – illustrated with fragments of original texts, and skillfully combined with a soundtrack (songs written especially for a given project). Thus, both the structure of the original work and its linguistic layer were reorganized. A literary work of art became a kind of addition to a new text; it created the impression that its essence is the plot, and that reading a literary work of art may be reduced to summarizing selected aspects of the original narrative using contemporary language.

Participatory games

Participatory games, which focus on the experience of the recipient, are different. They are not remakes of well-known texts but original works. Readers can thus decide in which directions specific plot lines should develop, what should happen to different characters (including their characteristic features), and how a given story should end. A literary work thus becomes a playing field in which the recipient creates their own narrative structures – narrative variants of the text – which vary depending on their personal aesthetic and cognitive preferences.

"Participatory games" bring to mind Bryan Stanley Johnson's novel *The Unfortunates*.[12] It was originally published in 1969 (6 years after Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, which is considered one of the first books in which the reader could play a "textual game") and reissued in 2008 by the New Direc-

---

[11] *Allegro Lektury 2.0 – nowy projekt audio we współpracy Allegro i Storia by Astra* [Allegro School Required Reading Books 2.0 – A New Audio Project in Cooperation with Allegro and Storia by Astra], https://brief.pl/allegro-lektury-2-0-nowy-projekt-audio-we-wspolpracy-allegro-i-storia-by-astra/ (accessed: 7.07.2023).

[12] The Polish edition of Johnson's novel, translated by Katarzyna Bazarnik, was published by the Kraków Ha!art publishing house in 2008.

tions publishing house in New York (35 years after Johnson's suicide). The experimental "book in a box" allows readers to create their own narrative structures using unnumbered pages. The novel, set in a vaguely defined urban space (one can only guess that it is Nottingham in central England, as the description of the Forest Recreation Ground suggests), consists of 27 chapters of varying length (some as short as a paragraph and some as long as 12 pages). The 25 chapters "in the middle", apart from the beginning and the end, can be read in any order, which means that the number of all possible combinations is 15.5 septillion (a septillion is 10^{42}).

Hypertexts have a similar structure. The concept behind them was developed in the 1980s, as computer databases made it possible to create complex plots. Readers could organize plot lines, choose the ending, and create characters.[13] The aim of hypertexts was to create plot structures based on parallel narrative paths[14] in which: "(…) the number of possible plot line combinations (…) is both an advantage and a challenge for the reader; the reader can abandon such a work of art due to the excess of lexemes and the excess of the plot, insofar as all possible combinations are too tedious – they destroy the unity of the work."[15]

Hypertexts were inspired by role-playing games (RPGs), in which players assume the roles of fictional characters. Adopting RPG strategies made it possible to transform the reading of the text into a game played in the reader/player's imagination, allowing them to develop existing plot lines and create new ones. What took place in a game – supervised by a gamemaster (who made sure that plot modifications comply with the limits of the represented world)[16] – depended solely on the creativity of the players.[17]

The experience of role-playing games became an important inspiration for gamebooks, in which "the reader-player was to assume the role of the

---

[13] See https://www.techsty.art.pl/hipertekst/definicje.htm (accessed: 8.07.2023).

[14] Z. Fajfer, *Liberatura: hiperksięga w epoce hipertekstu* [Liberature: Hyperbook in the Age of Hypertext], [in:] *Liberatura czyli literatura totalna. Teksty zebrane z lat 1999–2009* [Liberature or Total Literature: Collected Texts 1999–2009], ed. K. Bazarnik, Kraków 2010, p. 4.

[15] R. Bromboszcz, *Poezja cybernetyczna, hipertekst, liberatura, poezja neolingwistyczna…* [Cybernetic Poetry, Hypertext, Liberature, Neolinguistic Poetry…], [in:] *Od liberatury do e-literatury* [From Liberature to E-literature], eds. E. Wilk and M. Górska-Olesińska, Opole 2011, pp. 58–59.

[16] See *Gaming as Culture, Essays on Reality, Identity and Experience in Fantasy Games*, eds. J.P. Williams, S.Q. Hendricks, W.K. Winkler, Oxford 2006. See also *Olbrzym w cieniu. Gry wideo w kulturze audiowizualnej* [A Giant in the Shadows: Video Games in Audiovisual Culture], ed. A. Pitrus, Kraków 2012.

[17] K. Jaworski, *'Wybór należy do Ciebie…' Gry paragrafowe – druga młodość zapomnianej formy rozgrywki* ['The Choice Is Yours…' Gamebooks – A Rebirth of a Forgotten Role-playing Game], "Studia Filologiczne Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego" 2015, no. 1, pp. 80–81.

main character and make choices that affect the plot.[18] In the 1970s, commercial remakes of popular RPGs were very popular,[19] including *Tunnels and Trolls* and *Choose Your Own Adventure*. Joe Dever's gamebooks also became extremely popular (9 volumes from the 28-volume *The Lonely Wolf* series were published in Poland). In 1987, the magazine "Razem" [Together] published Jacek Ciesielski's gamebook *Dreszcz* [Shiver].[20] *Goblin* [Goblin] was published a year later.[21] In 2002, the *Masz wybór* [The Choice Is Yours] website was created, where fans of Polish gamebooks could find new releases.[22] In 2010, the informal Wydawnictwo Wielokrotnego Wyboru [Multiple Choice Publishing House] and the online magazine *Masz wybór* were founded. They both popularize interactive culture (August 30th is the informal Day of Polish Bookgames celebrated by the Polish fans of Wydawnictwo Wielokrotnego Wyboru).[23]

Polish gamebooks have been gaining popularity in recent years. The list of best-sellers is long and the most popular gamebooks are: Bartosz Idzikowski

---

[18] Gamebooks were also inspired by literary experiments created in the first half of the 20th century. *Consider the Consequences!* by Doris Webster and Mary Alden Hopkins, published in 1930 by the well-known New York publishing house The Century Company, is considered the first gamebook. This relatively short 146-page novel tells the story of Helen Rogers and her two suitors, Jed Harringdale and Saunders Mead. It offers 43 different possible endings which depend on the decisions of the reader, who has to decide at the very beginning of the book which character tells them the story. On July 6, 2018, the book was read in excerpts on air on KZSC radio in Santa Cruz, USA, by James Ryan, with choices made by the station's listeners. See *Audience Adventure Radio Hour – Consider the Consequences (2018.7.6)*, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWCu6PnK5ls (accessed: 5.07.2023). Another example of a gamebook that actively engages the viewer is Ayn Rand's play *Night of January 16th* (inspired by the true events that led to the death of the Swedish match maker Ivar Kreuger). The drama takes place in a courtroom. The jurors, selected from among the members of the audience, have to decide whether the secretary is guilty of murder or not. Witnesses give their testimonies, and the verdict of the jury determines not only the ending of the play but also its course. The play premiered in 1934 in Los Angeles under the title *Woman on Trial*, and in the following year it was staged on Broadway (already under the title *Night of January 16th*). The story has also been adapted for television and radio. See A. Rand, *Night of January 16th*, New York 1971; B. Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, New York 1986.

[19] Edmund Wallace Hildick is considered to be the author of the first gamebook. In 1967, he created a story about a cat (*Lucky Les*). See T. O'Hare, *Lucky Les – The Best Book Ever? – Reader, You Decide…*, https://timohare.blog/2018/02/01/lucky-les-the-best-book-everreader-you-decide/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

[20] *DRESZCZ – Gra Paragrafowa*, dudziarz.net, http://www.dudziarz.net/dreszcz/ (accessed:6.07.2023).

[21] *Goblin – Gra Paragrafowa – Jacek Ciesielski*, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRSMCKY17-I (accessed: 6.07.2023).

[22] *Nasza Historia*, Masz Wybór, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

[23] *Masz Wybór | O książkach, w których Ty jesteś bohaterem*, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

and Jakub Caban's *Dziennik. Księga rytuałów* [Journal: The Book of Rituals]; Wojciech Grajkowski and Michał Gołębiowski's *Dziennik. Zagadkowa podróż* [Journal: A Mysterious Journey]; Krzysztof Firkowski's *Wagagunda* [Vagabond], Benjamin Muszyński's *Utopia* [Utopia], Jarosław Kloft's *Sąsiedzi Lonesbury* [Lonesbury Neighbors], Filip Wójcik's *Cyberkop. Cena nieśmiertelności* [Cybercop: The Price of Immortality], Igor Małyszczak's *Lot Żółtej Orchidei* [The Yellow Orchid Flight], Rafał Nowocień's *Czarny Legion* [Black Legion], Jarosław Irzykowski's *Wyspa Zmierzchu* [Twilight Island], Paweł Bogdaszewski's *Skafander* [Suit], Andrzej Bentkiewicz's *Pierścień lorda Hatifnata* [Lord Hatifnat's Ring], and Dominik Matusiak's *Amelia* [Amelia].[24]

Most gamebooks are based on relatively simple narrative structures. Krzysztof Jaworski divides them into three categories: (1) "labyrinths" (the story is usually set in a "secret labyrinth" or "a dark forest," and the player must figure out how to get out of this complex structure); (2) "interactive narratives" (the player chooses to follow given plot lines); and (3) "mixed" (a hybrid combination of the other two).[25] It seems that the categories distinguished by Jaworski may also help us classify other interactive forms, in particular those based on RPG strategies (for example, interactive audiobooks).[26]

Format games

Experiments in which a work is combined with its format – the medium in which it was recorded – is yet another fascinating example of a textual game. In this context, let me turn to two essays by Michel Butor, "Le Livre comme object" and "Sur la page," which refer to the tradition of concrete poetry.[27] Butor argues that the experience of reading is shaped by the for-

---

[24] *Gry Książkowe*, Masz Wybór, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/gry-ksiazkowe/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] This is clearly visible in such productions as *1812: Serce Zimy* [1812: The Heart of Winter], created by Jarosław Beksa, Rafał Sadowski and Krzysztof Majewski and produced by Orange Polska in 2011. It employs solutions known from role-playing games: listeners (who assume the roles of the characters from the Napoleonic Wars) are asked to make decisions regarding directions in which specific plot lines develop and even how they greet someone (either sincerely or ironically). See *1812 SERCE ZIMY #01 | Nowy początek starej przygody*, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5zs-5gl6dg (accessed: 7.07.2023).

[27] See *TEKS-TURA. Wokół nowych form tekstu literackiego i tekstu jako dzieła sztuki* [TEX-TURE: New Forms of Literary Texts and Text as a Work of Art], ed. M. Dawidek Gryglicka, Kraków 2005; J. Donguy, *Poésies expérimentales – Zone numérique (1953–2007)*, Paris 2007; A. Kremer, *Przypadki poezji konkretnej. Studa pięciu książek* [Cases of Concrete Poetry: A Study of Five Books], Warszawa 2015. See also *Cyfrowa poezja konkretna*, Korporacja Ha!art, https://web.archive.org/web/20191112020447/http:/www.ha.art.pl/prezentac-

mat of the text: the shape of a book, typography, illustrations, and even the quality of paper.[28] The scholar further explains that the physical potential of the medium – creative use of page layout, margins, columns, running heads, footnotes, typeface – does not only affect the quality of reading but constitutes its integral part.[29] At the same time, he emphasizes that experiencing the text in and through the medium of the traditional book can help one challenge contemporary reading standards and strategies, which are nothing short of an "ultra-fast consumption," the sense of which becomes outdated before the reader reaches the end.[30]

Butor's writings were an important point of reference for the development of *liberature* in Poland.[31] "Liberatura. Aneks do słownika terminów literackich" [Liberature: An Annex to the Dictionary of Literary Terms], published by Zenon Fajfer in 1999 in *Dekada Literacka* (a Krakow bimonthly published from 1990 to 2012), is considered the movement's founding manifesto. The concept of *liberature* is based on the idea that, apart from the linguistic layer of the text, typography, format, typeface, graphic art, illustrations, and the quality of paper are also important. The very notion of authorship is thus expanded. The author is also the artist/the graphic designer who designed all of the above aspects of the work. The reading experience is thus transformed into a kind of game with the format and the medium – material in and through which a work exists.

Zenon Fajfer asked: "(…) is language the only 'raw material' of literature? Or maybe a sheet of paper on which one writes is also a 'raw material'? (…) Can the concept of 'form,' that is 'a specific way of arranging words and sentences' (*Słownik Terminów Literackich* [Dictionary of Literary Terms], ed. J. Sławiński), be extended to include the physical shape of words and sentences? (…) Can the notion of form (…) be extended to include the physical format of the book? Does the concept of a literary work also include the physical shape and design of a book? Or is it just something that the print-

---

je/42-slownik-gatunkow-literatury-cyfrowej/2174-slownik-gatunkow-literatury-cyfrowej-cy-frowa-poezja-konkretna.html (accessed: 10.07.2023).

[28] M. Butor, *Essais sur le roman*, Paris 1992.

[29] See also *Liberatura, e-literatura i… Remiksy, remediacje, redefinicje* [Liberature, E-literature and… Remixes, Remediations, Redefinitions], ed. M. Górska-Olesińska, Opole 2012.

[30] K. Bazarnik, *Krótkie wprowadzenie do liberatury* [A Short Introduction to Liberature], https://www.slideshare.net/mik_krakow/katarzyna-bazarnik-krtkie-wprowadzenie-do-liber-atury (accessed: 4.07.2023).

[31] Z. Fajfer, *Liberatura czyli literatura totalna. Teksty zebrane z lat 1999–2009* [Liberature or Total Literature: Collected Texts 1999–2009], ed. K. Bazarnik, Kraków 2010, p. 7. See http://haart.e-kei.pl/e-booki/Zenon_Fajfer_-_Liberatura_czyli_literatura%20totalna_PL.pdf (accessed: 10.07.2023). On the features of liberature, see also *Liberatura*, liberatura.pl, https://liberatura.pl/ (accessed: 10.07.2023).

er, the bookbinder, and the publisher think of, usually in reference to the generally accepted rules and regulations? (…) The question of time is also problematic, albeit in a different context. *Słownik Terminów Literackich* distinguishes between 'story time,' 'narrative time,' and 'time in a literary work,' but there is no concept of 'time of a literary work,' that is, … reading time."[32]

Fajfer, in cooperation with Katarzyna Bazarnik, tried to answer these questions in his project *Oka-leczenie* [Mute-I-Late].[33] The title *Oka-leczenie* refers both to the idea of playing with the visuality of text as well as consciously "mutilating" literature (or rather de-mutilating it),[34] as the reader enters a small, only 63-page-long text-labyrinth. A short description, which is meant to encourage the reader to embark on this strange journey, informs us that we now find ourselves at the bedside of a person who is dying, and the conversations take the reader deep into the dying man's self. The text turned out to be a semiotic map, in which hidden meanings entered into non-verbal relations with one another, creating hypertextual structures. In order to organize (and understand) them, the reader had to pay attention to the color and the size of the font and word spacing, filling in the empty spaces and creating their own interpretations. For example, the first letters of words spelled out a new text, and repeating the whole procedure allowed the reader to decipher a word hidden "underneath." Reading was thus a form of contemplation. It was the recipient-participant who determined its direction and pace.[35]

Technological games

Among the most peculiar textual games are those which involve artificial intelligence.[36] Algorithms that imitate the linguistic structures of famous works are able to create simple narratives/texts in a specific style and/or genre. AI "poem generators," that is, operating systems designed to create

---

[32] Z. Fajfer, *Liberatura. Aneks do słownika terminów literackich* [Liberature: An Annex to the Dictionary of Literary Terms], "Dekada Literacka" 30.06.1999, no. 5–6 pp. 8–9. See also http://haart.e-kei.pl/e-booki/Zenon_Fajfer_-_Liberatura_czyli_literatura%20totalna_PL.pdf (accessed: 4.07.2023).

[33] This project brings to life liberatic theory, that is non-verbal and typographic means of expression, layout, iconicity, self-reflexivity (metatextuality), hybridity (polymediality), interactivity and ergodicity (the reader's involvement and effort). *Ibidem*, pp. 160–161.

[34] Ł. Matuszyk, *Liberackie ciało i jego 'Oka-leczenie'* [Liberatic Body and Mute-I-Late], [in:] "Er(r)go. Teoria–Literatura–Kultura" 2016, no. 32(1), p. 45.

[35] K. Bazarnik, *Liberatura, czyli o powstawaniu nowych gatunków (literackich)* [Liberature, or the Creation of New (Literary) Genres], [in:] *Od liberatury do e-literatury*, eds. E. Wilk and M. Górska-Olesińska, Opole 2011, pp. 18–19.

[36] See K. Różanowski, *Sztuczna inteligencja: rozwój, szanse i zagrożenia* [Artificial Intelligence: Development, Opportunities and Threats], "Zeszyty Naukowe" 2007, pp. 110–111.

unusual combinations of words, rhymes, rhythmic patterns, metaphors, metonymy, and symbols collected in "poetry" databases are a good example of this. The popular Polish poem generator *Poeta* [The Poet] is able to imitate "poetical" lexical and phraseological structures and combine them into longer texts. It can generate a simple "generic" text: a *disco polo* song, a Gothic poem, or a love poem.[37]

The installation *Please, Feed The Lions*, created by Es Devlin and Google Arts & Culture in 2018, was based on a similar concept. An interactive sculpture of a lion in London's Trafalgar Square invited one to enter text on a touch screen, which then appeared in the lion's mouth. The AI poem generator created surprising combinations of words and syntactic structures, extracting from them meanings which extended beyond the literal. Such "poems" were usually very short, no longer than one sentence, but they read like *bona fide* linguistic and formal poetic experiments.[38]

In 2014, Margaret Sarlej, a PhD candidate at the University of New South Wales, Australia, devised the Moral Storytelling System, which generates a simple fable with a moral. Users were asked to choose one of the six main themes found in Aesop's fables (retribution, greed, pride, realistic expectations, recklessness, and reward), and the system then generated a narrative sequence closely related to 22 different emotions displayed by characters in different types of stories.[39]

In 2018, *1 the Road* was published – the first novel written by artificial intelligence (published by Jean Boîte Éditions) whose algorithm was designed by Ross Godwin.[40] The idea behind the book, which emulates Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, was simple enough: an algorithm that generates simple sentence sequences used the data collected by Goodwin during his trip from New York to New Orleans in March 2017[41] (he covered the distance of 1,300 miles in 20 hours; a surveillance camera monitored and recorded the entire journey, a microphone recorded conversations inside the car, a GPS tracked the car's location, and a computer clock was used to

---

[37] See http://poetycko.eu (accessed:12.07.2023).

[38] See https://artsandculture.google.com/project/please-feed-the-lions (accessed: 7.07.2023).

[39] *Australijka opracowała program komputerowy, który pisze bajki z morałem*, Booklips. pl, https://booklips.pl/newsy/australijka-opracowala-program-komputerowy-ktory-pisze-bajki-z-moralem/#google_vignette (accessed: 11.07.2023).

[40] W. Orzeł, *"1 the Road" to pierwsza powieść napisana przez sztuczną inteligencję*, AI Business, https://aibusiness.pl/1-the-road-to-pierwsza-powiesc-napisana-przez-sztuczna-inteligencje/ (accessed: 14.05.2021).

[41] T. Hornigold, *The First Novel Written by AI Is Here – and It's as Weird as You'd Expect It to Be*, singularityhub.com, https://singularityhub.com/2018/10/25/ai-wrote-a-road-trip-novel-is-it-a-good-read/#sm.00069qmis10ebdl7uan103cdtwnog (accessed: 11.07.2023).

keep track of time).[42] Goodwin chose not to edit the text, thus allowing us to study AI's choices. As a result, the prose is stylistically imperfect, rough, and at times illogical.[43]

In August 2020, TechGame announced that *AI: When a robot writes a play*, written entirely by robots and artificial intelligence as part of the THEaiTRE project, would premiere in January 2021 (it eventually opened on February 26, 2021).[44] It is estimated that the play could be seen by up to 30,000 people (it was viewed on different devices 18,450 times). The play proves that artificial intelligence is able to write dialogues, formulate simple statements, as well as ask and answer questions. However, it is clearly limited when it comes to creating larger operational structures, such as story arcs and other narrative structures.[45]

The GPT-2 algorithm, created by OpenAI and designed to produce original content, seems to be much more efficient in this respect. The algorithm can predict which word, found in a vast dataset comprising 40 GB of Internet text, can be logically and correctly combined with the previous one. GPT-2 is able to generate informational texts, short stories, fake news, and literary works. It can also write texts using a metalanguage (characteristic for a given discipline/academic field), including student final papers and diploma theses.[46]

---

[42] *An AI and an artist go on the road. "The idea was to write a novel with a car"*, CBC Radio, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/spark/409-1.4860495/an-ai-and-an-artist-go-on-the-road-the-idea-was-to-write-a-novel-with-a-car-1.4860760 (accessed:11.07.2023).

[43] Very unusual syntactic structures may be found in the novel: "It was nine-seventeen in the morning, and the house was heavy"; "The bowl is made of wood in the middle of the street and nothing comes into its middle"; or "The table is black to be seen, the bus crossed in a corner. A military apple breaks in. Part of a white line of stairs and a street light was standing in the street, and it was a deep parking lot". See W. Orzeł, *"1 the Road" to pierwsza powieść…*, *op. cit.*

[44] The play commemorated and celebrated the centenary of the R.U.R. (Rossumovi Univerzální Roboti) play directed by Karel Čapek (the play introduced the terms "science fiction" and "robot" into everyday language; it was translated into 30 languages less than three years after it premiered). See S. Janowski, *THEaiTRE, czyli sztuka teatralna napisana przez roboty. Premiera już niedługo*, Techgame, https://techgame.pl/sztuka-040820-sj-napisana-przez-roboty-i-sztuczna-inteligencje (accessed: 11.07.2023).

[45] S. Both, *Review: AI: When a Robot Writes A Play, Czech Centre London*, A Younger Theatre, https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/review-ai-when-a-robot-writes-a-play-czech-centre-london/ (accessed: 11.07.2023).

[46] *GPT-2 – sztuczna inteligencja zdolna do pisania własnych treści*, CTS SZKOLENIA PL, https://cts.com.pl/baza-wiedzy/gpt-2-sztuczna-inteligencja-zdolna-do-pisania-wlasnych-tresci/#:~:text=GPT-2%20E2%80%93%20sztuczna%20inteligencja%20zdolna%20do%20pisania%20w%C5%82asnych,postawie%20ogromnej%20bazy%20s%C5%82%C3%B3w%20zawartych%20na%20stronach%20internetowych (accessed: 11.07.2023).

Conclusion

Textual games lead to several conclusions. First, they demonstrate that the needs of readers have changed (and are still changing). A new type of recipient has emerged; they seem to be much more interested in the technological remakes of works of literature than in their traditional written renditions. This recipient, who is mostly interested in brief, and perhaps even fragmentary, reading, also performs important social functions: they co-create the commercial literary market and influence the aesthetic sensitivity of those who will read such texts in the future.

Secondly, textual games prove that the performance design of a literary work can be subject to genre negotiations between the audience (whose aesthetic sensitivity is shaped by visual and audio culture) and the publishing market (guided by economic criteria). The arising tension leads to a more general reflection on the changing status of a literary work, as well as genre typologies.

Thirdly, textual games inspire reflections on formal and aesthetic changes triggered by technology. Literary works can be created thanks to technology, and, respectively, they can increasingly use patterns created by artificial intelligence, robots, learning machines, or augmented reality. The impact of technology on the creation of new narratives is difficult to ignore and requires in-depth study by an interdisciplinary team which comprises both literary scholars and representatives of other disciplines.

Fourthly, technological development is also associated with ethical and legal risks. The ease with which it is possible to copy and modify other people's texts, plagiarize them, and program machines to produce fake news proves that technological development has outpaced legal, ethical, and moral regulations.[47] This also applies to literature and the publishing market. In this context, questions concerning the author, the author's (unique) style, as well as plagiarism, or simply imitation, take on a new meaning.

Last but not least, textual games also inspire reflections on the status of contemporary literary studies. The scale and the scope of the discussed experiments make the creation of new research approaches, "practical methodologies" used to analyze specific works, necessary. This means that we do not have a universal "toolbox" at our disposal but only individual

---

[47] See J. Wachowski, *Deepfejki – medialne falsyfikacje ciała. Cechy, funkcje, strategie komunikacyjne* [Deepfakes – Media Falsifications of the Body: Features, Functions, Communication Strategies], "Czas Kultury" 2022, no. 4, pp. 209–224.

instruments that allow for a fragmentary analysis of the whole.[48] This, in turn, requires that we activate broader cognitive contexts, including social, psychological, communication and economic studies.

Translated by Małgorzata Olsza

REFERENCES

1812 SERCE ZIMY #01 | Nowy początek starej przygody, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5zs-5gl6dg (accessed: 7.07.2023).

Allegro Lektury 2.0 – nowy projekt audio we współpracy Allegro i Storia by Astra, https://brief.pl/allegro-lektury-2-0-nowy-projekt-audio-we-wspolpracy-allegro-i-storia-by--astra/ (accessed: 7.07.2023).

An AI and an artist go on the road. "The idea was to write a novel with a car", CBC Radio, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/spark/409-1.4860495/an-ai-and-an-artist-go-on-the-road--the-idea-was-to-write-a-novel-with-a-car-1.4860760 (accessed:11.07.2023).

Audience Adventure Radio Hour – Consider the Consequences (2018.7.6), YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWCu6PnK5ls (accessed: 5.07.2023).

Australijka opracowała program komputerowy, który pisze bajki z morałem, Booklips.pl, https://booklips.pl/newsy/australijka-opracowala-program-komputerowy-ktory-pisze-bajki-z-moralem/#google_vignette (accessed: 11.07.2023).

Bazarnik K., *Krótkie wprowadzenie do liberatury*, https://www.slideshare.net/mik_krakow/katarzyna-bazarnik-krtkie-wprowadzenie-do-liberatury (accessed: 4.07.2023).

Bazarnik K., *Liberatura, czyli o powstawaniu nowych gatunków (literackich)*, [in:] *Od liberatury do e-literatury*, eds. E. Wilk and M. Górskaj-Olesińska, Opole 2011.

Białostocki J., *Tradycja i innowacja*, [in:] *Refleksje i syntezy ze świata sztuki*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 11–17.

Both S., *Review: AI: When a Robot Writes A Play, Czech Centre London*, A Younger Theatre, https://www.ayoungertheatre.com/review-ai-when-a-robot-writes-a-play--czech-centre-london/ (accessed: 11.07.2023).

Branden B., *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, New York 1986.

Bromboszcz R., *Poezja cybernetyczna, hipertekst, liberatura, poezja neolingwistyczna…*, [in:] *Od liberatury do e-literatury*, eds. E. Wilk and M. Górska-Olesińska, Opole 2011.

Butor M., *Essais sur le roman*, Paris 1992.

Chrudzimski A., *Teoria intencjonalności Romana Ingardena*, "Edukacja Filozoficzna" 1998, no. 25, pp. 249–260.

---

[48] See E. Domańska, *Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka?* [What Methodology Does the Contemporary Humanities Need?], "Teksty Drugie" 2010, no. 1–2, pp. 45–55.

Cyfrowa poezja konkretna, Korporacja Ha!art, https://web.archive.org/web/2019111
    2020447/http:/www.ha.art.pl/prezentacje/42-slownik-gatunkow-literatury-cyfro-
    wej/2174-slownik-gatunkow-literatury-cyfrowej-cyfrowa-poezja-konkretna.html
    (accessed: 10.07.2023).

Domańska E., *Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka?*, "Teksty Drugie"
    2010, no. 1–2, pp. 45–55.

Donguy J., *Poésies expérimentales – Zone numérique (1953–2007)*, Paris 2007.

DRESZCZ – Gra Paragrafowa, dudziarz.net, http://www.dudziarz.net/dreszcz/ (acces-
    sed: 6.07.2023).

Fajfer Z., *Liberatura czyli literatura totalna. Teksty zebrane z lat 1999–2009*, ed. K. Ba-
    zarnik, Kraków 2010.

Fajfer Z., *Liberatura. Aneks do słownika terminów literackich*, "Dekada Literacka"
    30.06.1999, no. 5–6.

Fajfer Z., *Liberatura: hiperksięga w epoce hipertekstu*, [in:] *Liberatura czyli literatura
    totalna. Teksty zebrane z lat 1999–2009*, ed. K. Bazarnik, Kraków 2010.

Gaming as Culture, Essays on Reality, Identity and Experience in Fantasy Games, eds.
    J.P.Williams, S.Q. Hendricks, W.K. Winkler, Oxford 2006.

Genette G., *Palimpsestes. La litterature au second degree*, Paris 1982.

Głowiński M., *O intertekstualności*, "Pamiętnik Literacki" 1986, no. 4.

Goblin – Gra Paragrafowa – Jacek Ciesielski, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/
    watch?v=hRSMCKY17-I (accessed: 6.07.2023).

GPT-2 – sztuczna inteligencja zdolna do pisania własnych treści, CTS SZKOLENIA
    PL, https://cts.com.pl/baza-wiedzy/gpt-2-sztuczna-inteligencja-zdolna-do-pisania-
    -wlasnych-tresci/#:~:text=GPT-2%20%E2%80%93%20sztuczna%20inteligencja%20
    zdolna%20do%20pisania%20w%C5%82asnych,postawie%20ogromnej%20bazy%20
    s%C5%82%C3%B3w%20zawartych%20na%20stronach%20internetowych (acces-
    sed: 11.07.2023).

Gry Książkowe, Masz Wybór, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/gry-ksiazkowe/ (accessed:
    6.07.2023).

Hornigold T., *The First Novel Written by AI Is Here – and It's as Weird as You'd Expect It to
    Be*, singularityhub.com, https://singularityhub.com/2018/10/25/ai-wrote-a-road-trip-
    -novel-is-it-a-good-read/#sm.00069qmis10ebdl7uan103cdtwnog (accessed: 11.07.2023).

http://poetycko.eu (accessed: 12.07.2023).

https://artsandculture.google.com/project/please-feed-the-lions (accessed: 7.07.2023).

http://haart.e-kei.pl/e-booki/Zenon_Fajfer_-_Liberatura_czyli_literatura%20totalna_
    PL.pdf (accessed: 10.07.2023).

https://www.techsty.art.pl/hipertekst/definicje.htm (accessed: 7.07.2023.

Ingarden R., *Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. K. Olsen and R.A. Crowley,
    Evanston 1973.

Ingarden R., *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology,
    Logic, and Theory of Literature*, trans. G. Grabowicz, Evanston 1973.

Janowski S., *THEaiTRE, czyli sztuka teatralna napisana przez roboty. Premiera już
    niedługo*, Techgame, https://techgame.pl/sztuka-040820-sj-napisana-przez-robo-
    ty-i-sztuczna-inteligencje (accessed: 11.07.2023).

Jaworski K., *'Wybór należy do Ciebie…' Gry paragrafowe – druga młodość zapomnianej formy rozgrywki*, "Studia Filologiczne Uniwersytetu Jana Kochanowskiego" 2015, no. 1.

Krauze-Sikorska H., Klichowski M., *Świat digital natives. Młodzież w poszukiwaniu siebie i innych*, Poznań 2013.

Kremer A., *Przypadki poezji konkretnej. Studa pięciu książek*, Warszawa 2015.

Kristeva J., *Problèmes de structuration du texte*, [in:] *Tel Quel: Théorie d'ensemble*, Paris 1968, pp. 297–316.

Kristeva J., *Semiotique. Recherches pour une semanalyse*, Paris 1969.

'Lalka' Bolesława Prusa odczytana na nowo w serialu audio. Wieniawa i Woronowicz w rolach głównych, https://news.empik.com/109861-lalka-boleslawa-prusa-odczytana-na-nowo-w-serialu-audio-wieniawa-i-woronowicz-w-rolach-glownych (accessed: 7.07.2023).

Liberatura, liberatura.pl, https://liberatura.pl/ (accessed: 10.07.2023).

Liberatura, e-literatura i… Remiksy, remediacje, redefinicje, ed. M. Górska-Olesińska, Opole 2012.

Masz Wybór | O książkach, w których Ty jesteś bohaterem, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

Matuszyk Ł., *Liberackie ciało i jego 'Oka-leczenie'*, [in:] "Er(r)go. Teoria–Literatura–Kultura" 2016, no. 32(1).

Nasza Historia, Masz Wybór, https://masz-wybor.com.pl/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

O'Hare T., *Lucky Les – The Best Book Ever? – Reader, You Decide…*, https://timohare.blog/2018/02/01/lucky-les-the-best-book-ever-reader-you-decide/ (accessed: 6.07.2023).

Okopień-Sławińska A., *Relacje osobowe w literackiej komunikacji*, [in:] *Problemy Socjologii Literatury*, ed. J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1971, pp. 109–125.

Olbrzym w cieniu. Gry wideo w kulturze audiowizualnej, ed. A. Pitrus, Kraków 2012.

Orzeł W., *"1 the Road" to pierwsza powieść napisana przez sztuczną inteligencję*, AI Business, https://aibusiness.pl/1-the-road-to-pierwsza-powiesc-napisana-przez-sztuczna-inteligencje/ (accessed: 14.05.2021).

Postman N., *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*, New York 1992.

Rand A., *Night of January 16th*, New York 1971.

Różanowski K., *Sztuczna inteligencja: rozwój, szanse i zagrożenia*, [in:] "Zeszyty Naukowe" 2007.

Świontek S., *Dialog – dramat – metateatr. Z problemów teorii tekstu dramatycznego*, Łódź 1990.

TEKS-TURA. Wokół nowych form tekstu literackiego i tekstu jako dzieła sztuki, ed. M. Dawidek Gryglicka, Kraków 2005.

Ubersfeld A., *Reading Theater*, trans. F. Collins, Toronto 1999.

Wachowski J., *Deepfejki – medialne falsyfikacje ciała. Cechy, funkcje, strategie komunikacyjne*, "Czas Kultury" 2022, no. 4, pp. 209–224.

Wachowski J., *Mit – dramat – tradycja. O transtekstualności w polskiej dramaturgii współczesnej*, Poznań 1993.

Wóycicki K., *Forma językowa prozy polskiej i wiersza polskiego*, Warszawa 1912.

Ziomek J., *Projekty wykonawcy w dziele literackim, a problemy genologiczne*, [in:] *Powinowactwa literatury. Studia i szkice*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 102–132.
Ziomek J., *Retoryka opisowa*, Wrocław 1990.

Jack Wachowski – Full professor in the Department of Literary Aesthetics in the Institute of Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University. Member of the Polish-Czech Scientific Society, and the Poznań Society of Friends of Science. He deals with the aesthetics of performance, new technologies, the theory of drama, as well as literary communication. He is the author of six books, several collective works, as well as articles published in "Pamiętnik Teatralny", "Przestrzenie Teorii" and "Czas Kultury". ORCID: 0000-0002-4859-3963. E-mail address: <jackearn@amu.edu.pl>.