

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

### Setting

The articles presented in *On-line/Off-line – Between Text and Experience* concern the status of words and literature in contemporary culture. Opinions about 'the death of words', words displaced by pictures, are no longer formulated with equal firmness as in the past. Word and image do not compete, they rather act as equally important 'ingredients' of today's culture. To revise popular judgments which reduce the meaning of the Word there is no need for detailed analysis, just observation of daily practices. The vast number of text messages, e-mails, tweets, comments, blogs' or social networking's posts written day by day confirms the strong position of words (language) in the new media and the "new new media" (as specified by Paul Levinson).

However, just as with the introduction of earlier media in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a new medium influences the structure and use of the old media. For example, when movies were introduced, they were initially just filmed theatre performances. It took some time before the techniques of cutting and scene changes were developed. However, once the techniques were established they had strong repercussions on the earlier medium of writing. Many authors, for example William Burroughs, started working with cut-up-techniques in their texts. This is a clear example of how the narrative forms of a new medium influences the narratives of an earlier medium. The use of e-mail and social media has already influenced the style of writing, making it more conversational. Similarly, the ever-presence of a camera in your smart-phone has radically changed the use of visual media. An important task of literary scholars is to follow and document the cross-fertilizations between different media, their influences on narrative structures and their roles in democratic processes.

The articles perfectly fit into the worldwide ongoing debate in humanities on the latest developments of cultural practice changing under the impact of new technologies – the way of experiencing the text, the various manifestations of “culture of participation”, website genres (among which blogs and microblogs have an important place). Despite the popularity of research on digital dimensions of human existence, the presence of the word (for example in oral culture) is a subject of unabated discussion in other reaserch contexts. Thus, the object of reflection in this volume is not narrowed just to selected “on-line” phenomena, but issues from the “off-line” cultural activites. In times of rapid technological change, enthusiasts of the new often subscribe to the theory of “supersession”, the idea that newer technologies supersede or vanquish older ones. But as scholar of information Paul Duguid has observed, reality is more interesting and complicated than that. In the 1950s, for instance, when television was becoming popular, there were widespread predictions of radio’s imminent demise. Yet here it is 2015 and radio is not only very much alive but has thrown off vibrant digital doppelgängers of itself, in the form of internet radio stations and podcasts. In fact it seems to be more appropriate to perceive culture not in terms of radical changes and so-called ‘turns’, but by emphasizing the continuity and co-existence of certain cultural phenomena. Henry Jenkins – who insisted that the most valuable ability in the age of convergence is to maneuver between old and new media – can be easily regarded as a patron of such a perspective.

So it goes for all of human culture: There is really no predicting where literary culture will go next. As the articles in this collection make clear, this is especially true of writing in our time, when old and new, online and offline, are mixing, mashing up and recombining so prolifically, no single theory could ever explain it all, let alone foretell its evolution. So it’s fitting that what we have in this volume is not a collection of definitive, supersession-like answers, but a multiplicity of fascinating questions explored in depth. Are microblogs a new literary genre? What happens when Japanese haiku leap across cultures? Is writing inherently an act of individuality, as we tend to believe, or is that idea just “a fruit of modernity”? Such questions will swirl around us for decades to come, and to make our way forward we will need intellectual roadmaps with the wide-ranging curiosity, high aspirations and serious intent of this one.

## Themes

On 13–14 June 2013, the Interdisciplinary Conference **On-line/Off-line – Between Text and Experience** was held in Lodz. The conference was organized by the Department of Theory of Literature, Institute of Contemporary Culture – former Institute of Theory of Literature, Theatre and Audiovisual Arts – (University of Lodz) and the journal “Problems of Literary Genres” The main subjects of reflection were the aforementioned democratization and dissemination of writing as a form of human experience, communication and creativity.

Writing – or, generally ‘to be with text’ – became a domain of every contemporary culture’s user. This is because the contemporary culture consists of literary texts, understood traditionally in terms of edition and genre background, as well as of polisemiotic hybrids, literary blogs, e-forums, e-poetry generators, posts, comments, tweets, e-mails and text messages. The ubiquity of the word (transmission of a text) despite the seemingly dominant trend of pixelation and the primacy of so called picture culture is symptomatic. It seems that the progressive technologization of the society does not affect the importance of the text and literature. Paradoxically, it acts as a stimulant in these domains, not only gaining new users for them, but also expanding their meanings.

The second part of the book, called *Literature and Convergence* consists of multiple articles about converging processes taking place amongst contemporary texts concerning culture – especially in literature. The main object of the reflection and discussion is the concept of convergence – which is extremely popular in contemporary scientific discourse. This term is used very widely: from mathematics and natural science, through to linguistics, politology and sociology, to studies in new media, communication and cultural anthropology. Are there actually so many contaminations, blendings and diffusions in cultural processes and how much does this phenomenon affect the literature and its theory? The goal of this publication is to explore and critically survey (from a literary studies’ perspective) some of the cultural mechanisms and their effects characteristic for the times of digitalisation of culture and rapid technological developments. What is (or should be) the place of literature and literary studies during these changes?

The articles included here focus on a variety of problems, often presenting the research field in differing ways but relative to the initial problem. The perception of non-obviousness and the diversity of converging

processes are combined here with an attempt to manage the multi-dimensionality and instability of convergence, which by definition introduces a modality, interdisciplinarity and multilingualism into text. The authors of the studies pose questions about the status of poetics in the age of convergence and the impact of digitalization processes on structures and features of genres and discourses. They analyze the ontological problems of hybrid texts and look for examples of convergence in concrete poetry, e-poetry, literature, logo-visual texts literary blogs, social networks, historiography and the city – understood as a space of text. The infiltration of the academic fields can also be seen in the selection of research tools and methodologies – e.g. pragmalinguistics is adjacent to the genealogy, anthropology, literary theories and studies on new media. We hope that the thematic range and a variety of research perspectives make this publication an important and interesting to read (multi-) voice in twenty-first century humanities discourse on the convergence problem.

## Articles

The articles selected for this volume focus on various topics and emphasize different methodological approaches towards diversified cultural phenomena. The first part of the book has the title *On-line/off-line* and deals with characteristics of digital experience, text and status of the reader.

**Ewa Szczęsna** shows in her paper *Literate Existence in the Digital Space. Contemporary Traces of Identity* how the development of writing technology influences writing itself. In this paper the analysis is focused on mechanisms of reinterpretation of writing and reading in digital space, in other words, the change in experience of text. To summarize, modern media techniques make reading become writing, when writing becomes clicking (an action taken upon the texture), and clicking becomes the experience of text. Another goal is to present a special role of the texture as the tool of text's creation as well as the place of cohesion. The importance of semiotic tissue of digital text, especially in the case of digital art, is visible in the formation of intratextual relations. These relations are created in the process of working one element of texture onto another, which allow them to play an important role in the creation of textual meaning.

**Marta Rakoczy's** article is an attempt to reveal an anthropological structure of following categories: text and writing; the categories that nowadays require cultural, historical and institutional relativization. She maintains

that the paradigm of writing as mental, individualistic creation and freely chosen way of life is a result of late modernity. Moreover, even today it is not the only paradigm and is not universally acceptable. The illustration of this that she develops in this text is an example of today's exercise books. School – as the main institution of literate initiation, including mass first contact with literature – is an institution in which the practice of writing, regulated by school breaks and specifically related to capitalist society's dual division of time, is a specific one, being a tool which is a well-defined, perceptual and social discipline. However, this discipline does not exclude creativity, as long as we leave its late-modern definition.

**Lidia Gašowska** in her *The Practice of Writing Fan Fiction. Tutorial of a Fan Fiction Writer* as well as **Agnieszka Oberec** in *I Write. You Write. They write. The Literary Works of Fandom as a Factor in Integrating the Community* describe fanfiction they underline that writing fanfiction is something that fans do together. Readers discuss original texts, share their views and opinions about plot and characters, and create common interpretation that can be used by other fandom members. They also participate in creating new texts by commenting on fanfics published by other fans. Writing is not only a way to express fans opinions about their favourite books and shows, but also an opportunity to spend time with people sharing their interests. Analysis of fan-created texts shows not only its importance to individual fans, but also a vital role writing fanfiction plays in building fan communities and creating bonds between their members.

Another author, **Karolina Sidowska**, exhibits different literary approaches to the emotion of shame in *Approaches Towards Shame in Contemporary Polish Literature*. Her thesis is that literature can be perceived as a tool for overcoming feelings of shame, as it is capable of expressing even the most intimate human experiences in aesthetic terms, outside stereotypical moral judgments. From this perspective she discusses exhibitionistic tendencies on the author's part and complementary voyeuristic impulses on the part of the reader. Sidowska presents examples from contemporary Polish literature background. Also **Dobrawa Lisak-Gębala** focuses on Polish literature exploring *Contemporary Polish Essays: In Search of the Aura of Paintings and Photographs*. The article by **Bartosz Kałużny**, which divides these to papers, is related to the topic of shame and it also takes into consideration the problem of constructing an identity – this time in a social media context.

The following paper by **Irena Chawrińska** describes a hybrid work of art viewed as a form of experience. The question is how can we understand the notion of experience in relation to the work of art, and, more impor-

tantly, to the hybrid work of art. The analysis of the experience category presented here is based on the philosophical texts written by Luigi Pareyso. Hybridity is also the topic of the next article by **Agnieszka Karpowicz**. Her *Reincarnations of the Word: Media, Genres, Practices* presents the project of study of the multimedia, contemporary verbal environment. It proposes the use of the category of speech genres (Bakhtin). Focusing on the secondary genres (genres of verbal creativity) it justifies the argument that "The word is not dead. It is merely changing its skin" (Dick Higgins), and therefore in the living verbal environment we deal with the changing, heterogeneous media of verbal expression that determine, in part, the modes of functioning of particular genres and how they should be described. This paper presents performance, text and hypertext as a basic means of functioning of the verbal forms in contemporary culture; means which demand adequate categories of description and research tools in order to avoid textualization of multimedia genres and not to treat them as literature.

The second part of the book titled *Literature and Convergence* opens with another crucial paper by **Ewa Szczęśna**. In *Poetics in the Age of Convergence* she presents changes in the structure of text (its structure and ways of creation, figures in particular) in digital discourse. The identity of digital communication is premised upon existing signs, texts, and discourses; and how it develops in the process of their adaptation and reinterpretation. The Internet seems to be a really good space in which different discourses become alike. This process results in the creation of a new poetics of text and discourse. Digital media modifies rhetorical figures (especially the ontology and functions of those figures), cancels figures existing in traditional texts (for example, inversion is invalidated because no determined way of reading the text exists), and creates new ones.

Changes in contemporary Poetics are also the main concern in **Maciej Maryl's** *Convergence and Communication: Genre Analysis of the websites of Polish Writers*. This article categorizes new forms of expressions on writers' websites as means of maintaining communication with readers. The first part is dedicated to inter- and trans-medial analyses of various multimedia materials published on such websites (e.g. biographical notes, photographs, trailers). In the second part, the website is analyzed as a hybrid text in which various types of expression are submitted to the main communicative purpose. On both levels of analysis the material is categorized in terms of the communicative function, for, as the author claims, the genre analysis of electronic discourse requires an approach which takes into consideration not only authorial intent and textual features but also the context of online utterance and the role of other partners of communication.

New media and texts likewise are the topics of the following paper about Twitter by **Katarzyna Sitkowska**. This article is an attempt to determine the place of microblogs, posted on Twitter, on the Internet or, more broadly in the multimedia genealogy. Then we can look closely at hybrid texts. **Irena Chawrińska's** *How Does the Hybrid Work of Art Exist?* studies a relation between hybrid works of art in the background of philosophical texts by Luigi Pareyson, Jurij Łotman, Wolfgang Iser. The main considerations focus on questions – What is the definition of a hybrid work of art? What is the impact of contemporary culture on the way of being a hybrid work of art? Do the hybrid works of art reflect the experience of contemporary reality? The reflection here is based on concrete poetry, book works, book objects and liberature.

Liberature is also a major interest in **Irena Górska's** paper on the *Reconfiguration of Aisthesis*. This article proposes to inspect the phenomenon of liberature from the perspective of the reconfiguration of aisthesis, as described by Wolfgang Iser. In the German researcher's approach, this consists in questioning the primacy of vision in favour of other senses, and is, first of all, an effect of the dominance of the media. However – as Górska describes – in a broader approach towards the reasons of transformations, aisthesis must be looked for in phenomena that are summarised in the formula of “new aesthetics”, as proposed by Arnold Berleant. One of the significant features of this concept is the constant expansion of the area of art and the appearance of forms that stimulate the audience experience, requiring the activation of new sensory receptors. Without a doubt Górska suggests, liberature is one of those forms of art that require interactivity and a special involvement. Being a unique example of the co-existence of various types of messages (verbal, iconic and material), liberature requires a polysensory perception. This, in turn, can be a source of aesthetic satisfaction, but also a reason for an impoverishment of the aesthetic experience spanning between aisthesis and anaisthesis.

We find a different kind of approach to texts in **Magdalena Lachman's** *Literature in/of the City – Introductory Comments*. The article attempts to describe a variety of possible ways in which literature makes itself present within the space of the city. It assumes two basic perspectives to investigate the issue. First of all, the article analyses how the city and its multiple institutions support the literature's circulation and availability for the readers. The city offers a number of venues for writers to present their works and promote them through precisely targeted events and literary festivals. The city is seen as a stage or background on which literary works

and events can become fully available. Secondly, the article analyses how literary critics or more broadly philosophers and sociologists interested in urban studies use literature to understand and describe the city in its artistic and everyday dimensions. The fruitful collaboration between city as an active factor shaping artistic imagination and writers leads to developing new forms of expression as well as formulating new ideas about art. It also offers a possibility to communicate with readers in ways which are better accommodated to modern visual imagination and different forms of everyday activity.

The other kind of blending space is described in *Literary Studies, History and Popular Culture – the Spaces of Convergence. Introduction by Natalia Lemann*. The aim of the article is to juxtapose literary studies, literature and history as neighboring branches of humanistic knowledge. The author compares the methodologies of history and literary studies in the field of narrativity, and, in accordance with Hayden White, comprehends history as a type of fiction, historio-graphia, and literary artifact. In this view historiography and literary studies are diagnosed as forming a sisterhood relationship. When the opportunity arises it is shown that the idea of postmodern history is no novelty, since until the decline of the 18<sup>th</sup> century history and literary studies have not been opposite at all. Actually, the way of thinking about history as an (literary) art has a splendid tradition rooted in antiquity. A comparative analysis – says Lemann – leads to the conclusion, that both these “scientific” branches developed almost simultaneously (cf. feminism, gender, postcolonialism, posthumanism, animal studies). Moreover literary genres, such as the (post)modern historical novels, alternate histories or historical fantasy, opened the space of convergence between history and the literary, because of mutual fluctuation and “parasiting” of ideas, topics and poetic. The participation of popular culture makes history and literary studies more transgressive, widely open to contemporary forms of communication and more audible. In this scope, the author presents historical game books, facebook`s historical events, transmedia historical stories.

(Pop)culture is as well the field of interest of **Katarzyna Gutkowska**, who focuses on one of the newest notions in Spanish literary theory created by Eloy Fernández Porta in his work *Afterpop. La literatura de la implosion mediatica* (2007). This theorist reaches for the aesthetical accomplishments of postmodernism, avant-pop and cyberpunk in order to analyze them in the context of the new artistic mentality from the beginnings of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Juggling a multitude of literary techniques and names from various cultural backgrounds such as W. S. Burroughs, Julián Ríos, David



Foster Wallace, David Cronenberg or Michael Haneke, Fernández Porta the paper shows new criteria and new methods of recognizing the complexity and insights of intermediatic, multifaceted and polysemic, implosive "new literature".

On the other hand, the closure of *On-line/Off-line – Between Text and Experience. Writing as a Lifestyle* consists of two papers focusing on comparative studies in relation to Polish literature and literary practice. **Beata Śniecikowska** in her *Transcultural Convergence? Polish Poets and Artists and the Oriental Verbo-visibility* discusses different aspects of convergence processes of the traditional Oriental genres in the Polish culture, focusing on haiku, *haiga* and *haibun*. It examines artists' books, visual arts and the artistic websites. The theoretical frame of the research is rooted in the concept of transculturality introduced by Wolfgang Iser. The author analyses Polish works of art employing different strategies of combining words and images, thereby showing unexpected similarities between cultures and revealing the artistic changes caused by the choice of different media. The investigation proves that the most interesting compositions uncover unexpected common elements between apparently contradictory traditions, the necessary condition is, however, at least the basic knowledge about the Other.

The figure of the Other bring us back to liberature in the last article. **Bogusława Bodzioch-Bryła**'s paper titled *From an E-narrative Poem Towards an Interactive Work of Art. Media Convergence Illustrated with DOWN by Zenon Fajfer and The Surprising Spiral by Ken Feingold*. The article, using an example of a work belonging to the literary style (*Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę [Detect Ozone Hole Nearby]* by Zenon Fajfer) and the interactive art (the installation *The Surprising Spiral* by Ken Feingold) analyses the idiosyncrasy of works positioning themselves at the borderland of media and literature, works both literary (textual, narrative and poetic) as well as media ones (changeable, iconic, set in a computer program, double-indirect), paying attention to the meaningfulness of the disciplines borderland (in this case literary and media studies). The author stresses the reasonableness of the question asked by Katarzyna Bazarnik, whether, by accident, the "Darwinian" evolution of species continues. In the author's opinion, based on her observation of works belonging to the literary style and the discussed work *The Surprising Spiral* by Ken Feingold, this question should get a positive answer. And possibly, as an effect of initiation, which has already happened, we will soon be entering the museum-gallery space not only in order to look but also to read.

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*On-line/Off-line – Between Text and Experience. Writing as a Lifestyle* considers a lot of significant issues, combining in an interesting way the specificity of the local with problems discussed in the world humanities. At the same time it gives reception to western debates and offers a number of interesting conclusions arising from the regional – Polish – experience. Therefore this publication is addressed to a broad range of readers – not only those from Poland.