РЕЦЕНЗІЇ, ХРОНІКИ НАУКОВОГО ЖИТТЯ

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PSYCHOPOETICS: REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE OF INTERPRETING POETRY

Introduction. The everlasting debate over the specificity of scientific and humanitarian knowledge tends to result in emphasising, among others, their principal difference: (i) the capacity for replicating the research results, which is a necessary prerequisite for hard and life sciences, along with (ii) particularities in the way of elaborating and enhancing knowledge [Ochsner, Hug, Galleron, 2017]. If hard and life sciences tend to develop their content linearly, relying upon conceptual breakthroughs and cutting-edge ideas, humanities move along by way of accumulating knowledge, while often reassessing and reinterpreting familiar concepts in a new light by giving them novel, heuristically significant senses. Viewed from this angle, the monographic study by Willie van Peer and Anna Chesnokova [2023] might be regarded as a crystallized example of bringing together (i) experimental, evidence-based scientific hypotheses as to the impact of poetry on the reading audience at large and (ii) the quintessentially humanitarian concepts related to poetry, which are viewed through the terminological matrix of Linguopoetics reinterpreted with regard to updated cross-disciplinary gains.

A bit of history

For me personally this book is a comprehensively multivector one. Retrospectively, it brings associations with some past experiences, when Professor van Peer during his first lecture at Kyiv National Linguistic University suggested that we should take part in an on-the-spot experiment aimed at measuring the beauty and novelty of recurrent poetic structures (*I love you not / I love you not / …. / I love you notwithstanding*). The ideas elaborated in the

volume evoke enjoyable reminicences of numerous conferences and workshops, including the most recent ones, all around the world and in Kyiv too, with Empirical studies of literature being in focus [see also Miall, 2006]. And it definitely makes central the prospective vector of van Peer's and Chesnokova's research directed towards widening the horizons of poetry studies by introducing Psychopoetics as a happy blend of Stylistics, Text Interpretation, Psychology, and Empirical studies of literature.

Research questions

The emergence of Psychopoetics, along with other new varieties of linguopoetological studies – Cognitive poetics [Brône, Vandaele, 2009], Multimodal poetics [Nørgaard, 2019], Poetics of Intermediality [Воробйова, 2021], Neurocognitive poetics [Jacobs, 2015], etc., is not accidental due to striking interdisciplinarity of the present-day philological studies. The authors of the book under review define Psychopoetics in terms of the Psychology :: Poetics :: Poetry triad [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 1] as a theory of poetic experince [ibid., p. 191], an area of research that addresses empirical and psychological foundations of the readers' response to poetry in its experiential dimension. This emergent discipline focuses upon the psychological workings of poetry based on "textual analysis supplied with evidence-based support for stylistic observation" [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 135], which concerns the emotional reactions of readers and listeners in the context of their "general understanding of the workings of poetry" [ibid., p. 132]. To take a more romantic view, it is about how poetry lives in us in resilience through time & space [ibid., p. 171] and how it interacts with readers [ibid., p. xi].

The scope of the above assumptions made me start reflecting upon the issues brought up, the way they are presented, and upon research heuristics of the authors' hypotheses grounded in qualitative and quantitative tools of analysis applied to poetry. Important is the scope of contribution the above heuristics can make to elaborating the emergent metamethod of interpreting poetry and literary text as such [Vorobyova, 2017].

Discussion

Given that our colleagues' volume is referred to by them as a guidebook, it seems feasible to follow the lines of analysis explicated by its authors, i.e. from the content of poetic texts through their poetic form, relying upon the readers'/interpreters' personal experiences in order to outline the effects generated by poetic texts and generalising upon their influence on the reading audience.

Conceptual content

Poetry, viewed in this book through the prism of the pleasure principle at the heart of poetic experience [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 70], stands out as characterised by a set of properties. Among them, according to the authors' view, one can single out: (i) the predominant shortness of poetic texts, (ii) the specificity of their formal properties, (iii) density of meaning achieved through the use of figurative language, (iv) prevalence of the author's and readers' subjective emotional experience, (v) explicit strangeness of some textual elements and a poetic text as a whole, as well as (vi) the effect of sincerity, which stems from the reliance of poetry on factuality rather than fictionality, typical of prose [ibid., p. 1–2].

The sequence of highlights, according to which poetry as a multifaceted phenomenon is analysed in the book under review, explicitly marks, along with the foundational background of Formal poetics, the guidance of Cognitive poetics with its toolkit of concepts and mental images. Thus, the titles of seven (out of nine) book chapters identify Poetry through a set of interrelated concepts, which embrace Structure, Madness, Prettiness, Surprise, Revelation, Power, and Persistence [ibid., p. v]. Let me comment upon these poetic facets in brief, adopting the authors' parlance.

According to van Peer's and Chesnokova's assumptions, further verified experimentally, it is a meaningful hyper-regularity of recurrent **structures** that gives poetic texts a particular **prettiness**, bringing them closer to music [ibid., p. 70] and evoking pleasure in the readers' minds. Both **madness** and **surprise**, rooted in confusion, mark the necessity of transgressing the boundaries of the actual world into the world of imagination. At this, confusion acts as a metacognitive signal, in Paul Silvia's parlance [2009], the deciphering of which demands efforts on the readers' part, finally giving them a deeper sense of reality [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 76].

Revelation in poetry, closely linked to epiphany as a mystic feeling of significance & infallibility, has in the authors' view a triple manifestation – emotional, intellectual, and capable of personal transformation. The latter, for some readers, might become a life-changing experience provoked either by epiphany that brings emotional gratification through peaks in affective arousal [ibid., p. 90–96, 101–102], or by insight as a result of a long and subconscious cognitive incubation [ibid., p. 107].

The **power** of poetry that evokes the sensation of social cohesion, togetherness, consolation, and mitigated suffering [ibid., p. 115], is, in the authors' opinion, rooted in Aristotilean catharsis as purification and clarification of emotions, which, like revelation, are manifested in three forms. The latter emerge (i) as our need for feeling per se [ibid., p. 122], (ii) as a mental simulation of emotions provoked by the readers' affective resonance with the state of affairs depicted in a poem, according to the mood empathy hypothesis [ibid., p. 126–127], and (iii) as the transformation of the readers' emotional makeup [ibid., p. 119].

All the above poetic concepts are held together in poetry by thematic **persistence** as the endurance of themes through time, which has its historical, emotional and mental dimensions, making thematics "a kind of shorthand for particular knowledge" [ibid., p. 142].

Terminological matrix & methodology

The conceptual configuration of the multifaceted poetic space construed in the volume is amplified by the authors' virtuose analysis and interpretation of poems related to different languages (German, English, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Sumerian, Latin, Russian[1]) and cultures. It required a fresh look at the terminology and techniques traditionally applied to poetry as well as their necessary update both in terms of qualitative and quantitative analyses.

The tentative terminological matrix for qualitative analysis[2] of poetic texts, elicited while reading the volume and examining its content, comes down to a set of terms, the most important of which will be commented upon below. Here belong: (i) literariness, (ii) foregrounding, with parallelism and deviation as its varieties, (iii) mental processes related to cognition and emotions**,** (iv) personal as well as social attitudes and behaviour**,** (v) semantic labels such as density of meaning, figurative language, and ambiguity**,** (vi) thematics as a conglomerate of themes and travelling plots, and (vii) metamorphosis as "the notion rooted in an animistic world view, which was largely shattered by the scientific revolution" [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 144].

The identification and analysis of **foregrounding** (*aktualizace* in Chech) as a phenomenon related to Victor Shklovsky's defamiliarisation (*ostranenije*) – a strategic device which slows down the perception of art objects, renewing its sensibility [ibid., p. 78], had a truly revolutionary impact on linguistic studies of literary text, poetry in particular, both in their global and personal dimensions. It is no exageration to say that the phenomenon of foregrounding has always been of major importance for van Peer's research, starting with mid-1980s [van Peer, 1986] and on. That is why it is no accident that foregrounding, as a key concept, permeates all the chapters of the volume under review, being interpreted both traditionally, through parallelism and deviation as its major forms, and innovatively, with regard to emotions and brain workings, on the basis of systemic exploration and factual substantiation [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 144].

The emphasis on **parallelism** (phonological, lexical, syntactical, conceptual) as repetition with variations, a rhetorical device and a form of musicality, and on **deviation**, which increases the aesthetic appreciation of the text and the experience of beauty, widens and updates our vision of foregrounding. At that, deviation functions as a poetic license, which means that poets are not restricted by established norms and conventions and are allowed to depart from them [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 165]. The only thing that provokes my objections to this definition is the authors' stance towards foregrounding and defamiliarisation, where fore-

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[1] Regretfully, Ukrainian poetic treasury has been unjustly overlooked by the authors, which might be taken as a recommendation for next editions of the book.

[2] I will leave the interpretation of terminology used for quantitative and statistical analyses for a more profound survey by experts in the respective fields, though I do agree that evidence-based validation of the results constitutes a substantial part of the research gains presented in the book.

grounding covers both the form and the meaning (foregrounding is defamiliarisation and actualisation [ibid., p. 78–79]), leaving no room for "ostranenije" as an adjacent but separate phenomenon.

In his seminal essay "Art as Technique"[3] of 1917 Victor Shklovsky differentiates two main functions of what he calls the technique of art (Rus. *prijom*). One of them pertains to meaning (*to make objects "unfamiliar"*) and the other refers to the specificity of form (*to make forms difficult*[4]): "And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" [Shklovsky, 1965, p. 6].

Thus, without applying the term "foregrounding" which came into use later, Shklovsky tends to single out two facets of the predominant technique of art, where difficult forms (aka. foregrounding) act as a trigger of defamiliarisation, the latter aiming "to reinstall the emotional awareness of things around us by making us see them in an unusual way" [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 89–90].

Consistently following the once chosen empirical perspective designed to observe "real readers by way of carefully organised experiment, carried out to eliminate errors caused by intuition" [ibid., p. 83], the researchers take two consequent paths. They use statistics to reduce "a large amount of observations to a smaller number of underlying variables" [ibid., p. 63] and filter the results obtained which "are not due to chance or error but due to some structural characteristics" of poetic texts. It is worth mentioning that, following the traditional paths of empirical studies of literature, the authors tend to update their methodological assumptions and tools by way of cross-disciplinary transgression. The latter mainly concerns Cognitive poetics, Neurocognitive poetics [Jacobs, 2015], and I would dare say some implications of the Theory of emotional resonance [Воробйова, 2006] with the further elaboration of computational (SPSS), neurophysiological and psycholinguistic (psychological) approaches to literature.

Following Arthur Jacobs [2015], van Peer and Chesnokova incorporate into their analysis of poetry two routes of literary text processing: a) a fast route, which, being automatic and superficial, relies upon those poetic elements that belong to the textual background, giving rise to a mental picture of what the text is about; b) a slow (profound) route prompted by the foregrounded textual elements, which jointly generate senses that fall outside entrenched ideas and familiar expectations. The former route facilitates the readers' emotional involvement while the latter one promotes their aesthetic evaluation of the text, the resultant aesthetic and nonaesthetic feelings being in line with their neuronal correlates [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 127].

Experiential lens

One of the major highlights in the monographic study under review concerns its experiential bias that embraces several interrelated dimensions of poetry and its reading: cultural, historical, emotional, and ludic. **Their cultural dimension** includes intra-, inter- and multicultural poetic facets as well as cultural multiplicity and variety. **The historical dimension** of poetry and its reading brings together various poetic traditions, folklore in particular. **The emotional dimension** of reading poetry is based on the so called paradox of the arts, when the emotions described in a poetic text give rise to the emotions experienced and felt by the reader [ibid., p. 36]. These emotions, not infrequently ambivalent, might turn out to get embodied and delayed, thus leading to some revelation. **The ludic dimension** focuses upon playing with multifarious double meanings, with repetitions and symmetries of poetic structures, with their pulsation and tension between prescribed rules and their meaningful variations [ibid., p. 7], which jointly emanate energy [ibid., p. 68].

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[3] In some other translations the title of the essay is given as "Art as Device" [Shklovsky, 2009/1991, p. 1–13], and ostranenje is referred to as estrangement [ibid., p. 9, etc.].

[4] In other translations this phrase is reformulated as "to make forms obscure" [cited after Lodge, 1981, p. 9] or as "by [...] complicating form" [Shklovsky, 2009/1991, p. 6].

Taken together these dimensions make the interpretation of poetry open, with no final reading, when "readers have to leave entrenched categories behind and engage in a form of disencapsulation, or repositioning" [ibid., p. 79]. Van Peer and Chesnokova, following W. Tecumseh Fitch et al. [2009], claim that the reader of poetry goes through three stages of aesthetic experience: (i) recognising familiar elements, (ii) feeling surprise/ambiguity/tension brought by unfamiliar elements/foregrounding, and (iii) coming to the resolution of tension [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 178]. Such a pattern echoes with Leo Schpitzer's philological circle and a more recent four-step pattern of literary text interpretation suggested by David Miall and Don Kuiken [1994].

Evident gains of the authors' psychopoetic endeavour are systematised in the last chapter of the volume, entitled "Towards a general theory of Psychopoetics", as a set of 15 (!) general principles that underlie the process of experiencing poetry [van Peer, Chesnokova, 2023, p. 191–193]. To keep the intrigue afloat for those who are eager to start reading the book, I will not comment on the list in detail, moreover because some of these principles are intertwined in the general fabrique of this paper. I would only mention two of them, namely, Slowness and Incantation, which jointly characterize the reader's state of mind while experiencing poetry.

Slowness brings us back to Shklovsky's retardation, taking the reader into a lower gear, a meditative mind-set that is "almost never *presto*" [ibid., 2023, p. 193]. **Incantation** immerses the reader into a mystic world of magic, with its spells and charms, which mostly concerns the listening experience, making poetry "meaningful without meaning" [ibid.]. These two and other experiential principles evoke the idea of energy as a phenomenon naturally pertinent to poetry, giving rise to its powerful emotional appeal.

Didactic strategies

The intellectual appeal of the book additionally entails from its creative layout and design. Each chapter starts with a list of Keywords, which outline its terminological palette, and ends up in a set of Core issues that correlate with the respective key words, helping the reader to conceptualise (and reconceptualise, if necessary) the major ideas and assumptions brought up by the authors and presumably developed in the Further reading section.

As every metaphorically entitled chapter (like Poetry is Structure/Madness, etc.) zeroes in on the analysis of concrete poems, e.g., Goethe's "Heidenröslein", Basho's haiku, or Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer", etc., often plunged into the context of music or dance, the Companian Web-site with supporting materials (videos, texts, related tasks) comes in very handy. The volume contains a detailed Glossary and other Ancillary resources (Questionnaire samples), which makes it a true guidebook.

Conclusion

The breath-taking voyage through the vast space of Psychopoetics guided by Willie van Peer and Anna Chesnokova did not only make it possible to integrate traditional and novel facets of analysing and experiencing poetry in various temporal and cultural contexts, both theoretically and empirically. In my view, it gives evidence to the validity of the global vector that presumably characterizes the evolution of linguistic paradigms: (i) from the emphasis upon structural and functional properties of text and its elements to (ii) focusing on dominant mental images and key concepts in their affective and value-oriented aura, and still further to (iii) revealing sources and mechanisms of energy-driven impact of literariness and its poetic manifestations. I do envy readers who have just set off on this voyage; they will come ashore enriched with the knowledge of Poetics, Poetry and Selves, and what more, with a strong belief that research, like poetry, might bring a powerful revelation and emotional gratification.

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ПСИХОПОЕТИКА: МІРКУВАННЯ ПРО ДОСВІД ПЕРЕЖИВАННЯ ПОЕЗІЇ

Ключові слова: психопоетика, міждисциплінарність, емпіричні дослідження, метаметод інтерпретації художнього тексту, домінантні ментальні образи, емоційно-ціннісна аура, читацьке сприйняття, енергіальний вплив, емоційний резонанс.

Сучасні тенденції аналізу поетичних текстів з огляду на міждисциплінарність філологічних студій сьогодення дають поштовх до появи нових відгалужень лінгвопоетики. Одним з таких відгалужень є психопоетика як галузь, що спрямована на розкриття емпірико-психологічних засад читацького сприйняття поезії у його досвідному вимірі. Саме так тлумачать психопоетику автори монографії "Experiencing Poetry: A Guidebook to Psychopoetics" (London, etc.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023) проф. Віллі ван Пір і Г.В. Чеснокова, й саме це наштовхнуло мене на розмірковування стосовно змісту зазначеної проблематики, способів її викладу та дослідницької евристики запропонованих гіпотез. Метою цих міркувань є встановлення місця психопоетики серед інших відомих видів поетики, визначення евристичного потенціалу задіяних методик якісного й кількісного аналізу поетичного дискур-

су та окреслення внеску психопоетики у формування метаметоду інтерпретації поезії і художніх творів у цілому. Опертя на метод інтроспекції з урахуванням новітніх здобутків когнітивної і мультимодальної поетик, інтермедіальних студій та базових положень теорії емоційного резонансу дозволяє під іншим кутом зору співвіднести традиційні й новітні поняття лінгвопоетологічного аналізу тексту та спрогнозувати вектори його подальшої розбудови. Ці останні вписуються у загальний вектор еволюції лінгвістичних парадигм – від акценту на структурованості й функційності тексту і його окремих елементів до сфокусованості на домінантних ментальних образах чи ключових концептах у їхній емоційно-ціннісній аурі й далі до пошуку джерел і механізмів енергіального впливу художності та її поетичних втілень на читацьку аудиторію. Подібний вплив на аудиторію справляє і сама монографія з її прозорою структурою, креативністю й сучасністю подання матеріалу та безперечною залюбленістю авторів у поезію.

PSYCHOPOETICS: REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE OF INTERPRETING POETRY

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Key words: *Psychopoetics, interdisciplinarity, empirical studies, metamethod of literary text interpretation, dominant mental images, emotional and value-oriented aura, the readers' response, energy-driven impact, emotional resonance*

Current trends of poetic texts analysis, mainly due to interdisciplinarity of present-day philological studies, give impetus to the emergence of new varieties of linguipoetic studies. It fully concerns Psychopoetics as an area of research that addresses empirical and psychological foundations of the readers' response to poetry in its experiential dimension. That is the way Psychopoetics is viewed by Prof. Willie van Peer and Anna Chesnokova in their book "Experiencing Poetry: A Guidebook to Psychopoetics" (London, etc.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023). And that is exactly what made me start reflecting upon the issues brought up, their presentation, and upon research heuristics of the authors' hypotheses. Such reflections aim to establish the place of Psychopoetics among other types of poetics, to define the heuristic potential of qualitative and quantitative techniques applied to poetry analysis as well as assess the contribution this discipline could make to elaborating the metamethod of interpreting poetry and, wider, literary text per se. Relying upon the method of introspection along with new gains in Cognitive and Multimodal Poetics, Intermediality studies and basic assumptions of the theory of emotional resonance makes it possible to correlate traditional and novel facets of poetological text analysis in a new light, while prognosticating the vectors of its further elaboration. The latter prove to fit in the global vector that characterizes the evolution of linguistic paradigms, i.e. from the emphasis upon structural and functional properties of text and its elements to focusing on dominant mental images and key concepts in their emotional and value-oriented aura, and still further to searching for sources and mechanisms of energy-driven impact pertaining to literariness and its poetic manifestations upon the reading audience. The same can be said about the impact of this book on the prospective audience, given its transparent structure, creative and up-to-date manner of presenting the material, and its authors' undoubted love of poetry.

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