

Summary

Entangled World

The book *Entangled World* is a scholarly monograph dedicated to outlining a new approach to literature and art following the new categories derived from quantum physics, i.e. quantum entanglement (elementary particles are born or become linked in such a way that their properties are inherently correlated). From this perspective, 'entangled states' ceases to be just a metaphor. The quantum world has generated laws that facilitate other activities in the humanities that are consonant with performative thinking, allowing us to understand the world in action, to grasp variability, anti-binarity, to approximate emergent phenomena, to identify simultaneity, diversity, fluidity, instability, inconsistency as variable features of the entangled world. Seeking a new language, the humanities are shedding binary thinking, along with the schemas and aspirations towards order, harmony, and systematizing principles, which have been deeply ingrained in Western culture for centuries. There's been a rupture in our worldview something has fundamentally changed. By engaging with the concept of 'entangled states', the humanities are laying the foundations for new literary studies as an open discipline with its own kind of dramaturgy.

The book proposes entanglements at different levels of reflection (literature, criticism, art, aesthetics, politics, theatre...). It makes no attempt to encompass and exhaust individual problems, not only because these elude the "hypotheses of hidden variables", but, above all, because they are here merely "shreds", "glimmers", "reflections" of many interesting theories that form various possible, potential fields of observation. It does not comprise a coherent, consistent argument, and instead it often breaks up into fragments written at different times, sometimes far apart from each other; it relapses, explores, sometimes even contradicts itself. It retains these points as a testament to a certain inconsistency owing to the trace of thought determined by the time in which they were written. Moreover, in addition to the awareness adopted from Leszek Kołakowski's "inconsistency as the essence of the world" and the "praise of inconsistency", this procedure emphasises the laboratory nature of writing the book.

The book entangles together various scientific discourses with the matter of art, but does so in its own way. Johannes Vermeer's painting *The Lacemaker* serves as an inspiration for these intellectual considerations. The precisely guided thread that forms the intricate structure of the lace at the base of the painting is a tangled knot, a red stain of paint,

a matter of (pre)appearance. The thread builds connections, entangles the painting, we are confronted with the illusion of things. Vermeer's reflection on painting also concerns the essence of writing as the weaving of a thread that forms the underlying structure of a story, but at the same time reflects the drama of this matter of entanglement. This is why the book also contains the motif of the thread, the yarn, the warp, which connects the thread of the mythical Ariadne with Joseph Hillis Miller's (and Jorge Luis Borges') line of writing delineating and recreating the labyrinth, but also Tim Ingold's (and Paul Klee's) thread of reflection, the drawing line retaining both shape and error, with Tadeusz Różewicz's (and Samuel Beckett's) stage squares, with the images of the scattered lines of various dramas.

An entanglement of dramatic scenarios is achieved by bringing together the experience of Western theatres with traditions of the Far East, especially from Japan, Bali, Thailand, and New Zealand, such as *nō*, kabuki, bunraku, *butō* dance, Javanese Shadow Theatre, Classical Thai Theatre, and Maori performance, all of which teach a non-anthropocentric perspective on viewing the world. As a conscious endeavour, it seeks to introduce 'non-anthropocentric dramaturgy', to co-lead, complement, challenge, and develop the ideas of selected authors, many of whom are proponents of various philosophical currents or offer alternative viewpoints (e.g. Gumbrecht's 'production of presence', Graham Harman's 'object-oriented ontology', Karen Barad's 'entanglement', 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology' and agential realism, Donna Haraway's 'diffraction', Tim Ingold's 'braiding the open world', Bruno Latour's 'actor-network theory', Jacques Rancière's 'politicality of aesthetics', Giorgio Agamben's 'experience of potentiality', and Quentin Meillassoux's 'potentiality and virtuality'...). These quotations, fragmentary though they may be, are supplemented with references from the field of art, recalling poems, paintings, performances, theatre plays, exhibitions and so on. The reader is constantly required to "suspend perception", as Jacques Derrida or Jonathan Crary would have it, looking through the "soiled glass of the waiting room" of our imperfect cognition, as Różewicz wrote, or looking "against the light", as Georges Didi-Huberman regarded the Fra Angelico fresco, or as Mieke Bal suggests, seeing Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini's *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* "in flame and crystal", to try to understand "what the paintings want", as William John Thomas Mitchell does, or to penetrate with one's eyes through the grid lines in the paintings of Hans Bellmer or other avant-garde artists, as Rosalind Krauss proposes, and so on. Thus, it is possible to see the world "from behind the glass", "from behind the grid", "from behind the scenes", but also "from behind the frame", "from behind the stage", "from behind the mask".

Art and science, politics and aesthetics, philosophy and laboratory experimentation, the behaviour of particles in a quantum field and the actor's performance on stage – worlds colliding, looking at each other, entities interpenetrating – are all areas discussed in this book.

Through the lens of art, it shows how the world manifests itself in literature, how the literary domain resembles the workings of quantum entanglement. Aesthetics becomes again an important language for understanding the human and non-human world, a kind of primary philosophy, where affect, experience, the sensuality of cognition, etc., play a crucial role. We ask: How does darkness work? What does emptiness/void create? What constitutes being present, as opposed to the process of vanishing into ‘nothingness’? Art originating from within the world creates our identity as entities living among other entities. It determines our relationship with the human and the non-human, and triggers a new sensitivity by prompting questions contained in the ‘setting’ of the proposed view of the world.

We remain trapped in a system of notions that limits us, but at the same time opens us up to what is different, to human beings and all other beings (especially animals and plants, such as the “closedness” of a stone, the “offence” of a cat, the “shrugging of shoulders” and the “blossoming like laughter” of an apple tree, to give examples from Wisława Szymborska’s poems). Literature today does not only consist of phonemic languages, but also appeals to other means of expression, which quite realistically – like dance and gesture, word and sound, associating themselves with colour, building a kind of dramaturgy – introduce us to the visual experience of palimpsest, anamorphosis or synaesthesia. Still, it experiments with concepts, creating their extraordinary dramaturgy. By constructing a dramaturgy of concepts, by acting with them, by taking drama as a fulcrum in a world that has lost its centre, we are again and again ‘weaving an open world’ (Ingold) or making a permanent ‘reconfiguration of the world’ (Barad). We see the brim of a red hat in Vermeer’s painting, yet a moment later, we lose the sense of it being a part of the headgear of the girl portrayed, as the outline of the object blurs, becoming an indeterminate figure of matter. Or perhaps it is Vermeer’s interpretation of Niels Bohr, perhaps we are observing the effect of visualising a physicist’s experience of measurement, a scientist who creates entities, elementary particles, which are indeterminate before the measurement is made.

Such juxtapositions and attempts to create a dramaturgy of disciplines are emboldened by the very authors cited and invoked in this monograph, who themselves did not hesitate to venture into literary and aesthetic fields, finding areas of their own interest there. And that was the intention here – to try and capture, in performance, the experiences of the contemporary world: a world of breakdown and embrace, a world of contradictions, a world of cruelty and great beauty. An eternally entangled world.

Suspended between affirmation and the drama of existence, this book’s main purpose is to raise questions.

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