

Thesis Advisor's Report on the Bachelor Essay "Towards A Quantum Poetic Method: Quantum Computing and the Limits of Language", written by Samira Mekibes Meza

The presented essay concerns the limits of poetry facing the realms of quantum mechanics. That, of course, is an uneasy task, within the confines of a bachelor essay almost impossible to accomplish. That is why the essay focuses just on one poem by Amy Catanzano, which is analysed in the context of more or less analogous or relevant attempts of Ezra Pound, Thomas Stearns Eliot or William Butler Yeats and which is also reflected in the context of quantum mechanics itself. The poem has not been selected randomly; it stems from an actual creative cooperation between the poet and physicists and represents a pioneering attempt to break a barrier between a highly contra-intuitive world of quantum mechanics and the everyday experience as it is reflected in poetry, or, to be precise, an attempt to break a barrier between the language of poetry and language of physics. Whether the poem succeeded or not and whether it succeeded in embracing the quantum principles (instead of a mere superficial reference) are the key questions of the presented essay.

What, in my opinion, is to be appreciated, is that this essay ventures into a generally uncharted territory and tries to contextualize a phenomenon that is both new and highly complicated. Instead of targeting an already well-established academic problem that would be safe to work with, the essay risks everything in approaching a somewhat doubtful struggle that has not yet ended. In doing so, the essay – way above an average scope of a bachelor student – covers both literary theory and the quantum mechanics, not to mention the excursions into the field of philosophy or history of science and language problematics.

Such a complicated fusion is also the biggest weakness of the presented essay. To put it briefly, the essay is way too ambitious and by trying to paint a panoramic view of a problem – the view, which is itself valid and reasonable – it failed on the level of the individual scenes or details. Especially the chapters dedicated to Pound, Eliot or Yeats would require much more thorough work with the secondary literature that is generally missing, hence the conclusions – as much as they go in the right direction – are not well grounded and require a lot of tolerance and intellectual retouching to be acceptable. The essay also tries to respect the artist's approach as much authentically as possible, yet what is acceptable on the part of an artist (as an intuition or a metaphoric reconnaissance of a complicated terrain) is only limitedly acceptable on the part of an academic. The essay is thus full of cryptic, dark or clumsy propositions that tend to darken the matter instead of clarifying it.

These problems, however, do not outweigh the contribution of the essay, which did manage to present a relevant (and by no means self-evident) context to the Catanzano's poem, not to mention the apparent fervour to vindicate the ambition that the world of science and the world of art could communicate beyond the superficial level of inspiration.

I rate the essay with grade "3".



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