

## Reviewer's Report

Thesis Title: *Towards A Quantum Poetic Method:  
Quantum Computing and the Limits of Language*

Author: Samira Mekibes Meza

Faculty of Humanities, Charles University

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The reviewed thesis devoted to the problem of quantum poetics belongs with the less usual and less conservative research topics I have had the experience of assessing. It is, undoubtedly, an “experimental study” (p. 13). In the following I will argue that the thesis is, in broad terms, reasonably defensible as a bachelor's thesis, though it should have been significantly re-structured and re-designed. I consider the work unclear about its mission and thesis, but also suffering from a specific tunnel-vision owing to several initial commitments in methodology/theoretical background.

In the introductory pages, the paper presents its goal as one of arguing in favor of “a distinction between two tendencies of viewing quantum poetry – as writing about quantum ideas or writing within quantum ideas” (p. 3, also p. 12). The distinction itself, the distinction between “quantum ideas” and [something] written “within quantum ideas” is unfortunately poorly developed or elucidated. Is it writing “about” topic A as opposed to writing about X using the ideas of A? Is A in this sense a methodology or rather a theory, a set of ideas? Furthermore, the distinction is never really addressed, the only comment being “At present I am inclined more toward the view that quantum poetry has been written about quantum, and not within quantum.” (13 n.)

It seems to me as if the thesis implicitly understood poetry as a relevant means (or medium) of communication, as an instrument for furthering quantum ideas, “can poetry truly speak the same language as physics?” (p. 10) This might be a misinterpretation on my side, yet I would like to hear the student comment on this and—should I be right—also comment on what would make poetry special?

The thesis is very unclear about its mission, about what the main question or topic is. I have already mentioned several of such possible tasks, another one is formulated on page 12: “The present thesis tries to examine how language, in this case poetry, may describe experience in ways similar to quantum physics. However, we must ask: Is Quantum Poetry writing about quantum ideas, or within quantum ideas? The working hypothesis was formulated as follows: since language is a tool with which we comprehend our reality, quantum poetics incorporates quantum dynamics into its

literary devices, making the quantum ideas more accessible for readers without the specific scientific literacy, and perhaps poetics can attain something that even the scientific language and knowledge cannot attain on its own.” Not only is this the problem of understanding poetry as a vehicle of education in physics all over again, but, more importantly, what should “describ[ing] experience in ways similar to quantum physics” even mean?

What I struggle to comprehend is the connection or logical nexus between chapter 1 and (mostly) chapter 3. I understand that the three modernists somehow received the ideas of quantum physics. The author herself however admits that this reception remains almost mute. The new poetics in modernist poetry is being linked to the advances in quantum theory without taking (in any way) into account the avantgarde movements in literature and art. Similarly: why should the constellation effect be a token of quantum theory rather than of avantgarde experiments with typography? I am simply unconvinced of any real quantum poetry in any way or form existing in their works. This is not to say that some of the instruments or poetic expressions used by the authors wouldn't remind one of later quantum poetry, but not in the sense of actual reception. This is the tunnel vision I have mentioned earlier: focusing too narrowly on quantum physics and disregarding the necessary context. Or I don't mind being proven wrong.<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein, I have difficulties comprehending how should the modernist authors inform us about or further the ideas of quantum physics? I guess this is the problem of writing about quantum ideas as opposed to writing within quantum ideas all over again.

The introduction and the formulation of research goals gradually becomes more and more incoherent, almost to the point of unintelligibility (“The idea that consciousness is endowed with a self-initiating nature and inductive generation may contribute to a general healing and improving of the consciousness field of humanity, when individual and collective methods entangle for experimentation.” p. 14).

Finally: what is the relationship between the poet and the reader supposed to be like? Is the reader supposed to understand whatever it is the poet is communicating? Or is it necessary for the reader to already be knowledgeable of quantum physics in order to even grasp what is being communicated? I simply do not know.

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<sup>1</sup> “Despite there is no source admitting that Pound and Yeats were deliberately working with quantum theory, this doesn't take away the value of their studies and considerations, being an argument for Heisenberg's claim that art, despite being regarded as “subjective”, is affected by the events and the spirit of time, that can be “objective”.” (40)

Lastly, I need to challenge one of the underlying assumptions: why should we need to propagate, popularize or in any way make more accessible the theory of quantum physics? I would counter-argue: we do not, in any way, need to understand gravity any better than in what is termed as folk-physics (we “understand” it as a force holding us down). I simply fail to see the need for such quantum physics evangelical mission.

Needless to say, the conclusion steers clear of resolving any of the abovementioned problems and delivers yet another understanding of what the thesis was supposed to be about. “The first, was to serve as an introduction to the problems with quantum language and imagery, beginning with a brief historical background of the quantum revolution, which challenged classical concepts, the gap between science and art,...” (p. 67)

I have, in contrast, no problems with chapter 3. This seems to me as the original core of the work which has later developed beyond the scope of analysing Catanzano’s work. And I think it should have limited itself to just doing that. Instead of attempting an experimental study, it should have been a—perhaps less gloriously—first serious research project using a more conventional design.

Despite my overall strong criticism I still find the thesis admissible to defence. Grade-wise I find it to be “good” (3).

In Lejčkov, June 20, 2020

Jakub Marek, Ph.D.