

Summary

Musicality of a Literary Work

The book is a study falling within the range of literary theory, concerning – in the most general terms – various musical-literary relations in literature. This theoretical-literary attempt to sort the borderline questions (numerous artistic and analytical-interpretative strategies) is one of the possible relations between two different domains of art and is quite complicated to formulate. Simultaneously, it turns out to be of secondary importance, having started inspiring literary scholars (especially the present Western European comparative literature scholars) only recently, taking into account the long tradition of musicological or aesthetic-philosophical research works.

The category of “musicality” appears in the focus of interest, quite controversial in contemporary literary research and here considered both in its problematic and terminological senses (features of a literary text and the notion of an interdisciplinary importance, respectively). This risky term of “musicality” raises quite a few justified objections, just to mention crushing criticism by Tadeusz Szulc or Henri Meschonnic. On the other hand, however, it has often been applied by all generations of literature specialists. What is most characteristic is its being defined differently each time, in an individual way (hence the phenomenon of “paradigms of ‘musicality’” in the contemporary humanities).

In *Musicality of a Literary Work* a theoretical-literary perspective of perception is assumed, in essence searching for an answer – through a prism of “musicality” in its broad sense – to three elementary questions: “What type of filiations characterise a given literary text?”, “How is it possible to analyse such different cases of intersemiotic relations in the light of the intertextuality category?” and, finally, “What domains of research (and why) should analytical-interpretative activities of this type be included in?”

In the “Introduction” potential boundaries of extensive musical-literary studies and their particular enclaves are outlined, among others after the typology by Steven P. Scher, who distinguishes three general cases of relationships: 1) “music *and* literature”, 2) “literature *in* music”, 3) “music *in* literature”. However, already classical assertions by the American comparative literature scholar – Calvin S. Brown – are equally interesting as well as the latest elaborations by Western European researchers (J.-L. Cupers, I. Piette, F. Escal, J.-L. Backès, P. Brunel, A. Locatelli and others).

A thorough look at the present, diverse state of research makes it possible to locate the subject of theoretical-literary research on a wider background and simultaneously distinguish it, relatively precisely, from several questions – as an object of comparative studies. However, it should be added, the question is one of the branches of comparative studies, complementary to “traditional” comparative studies, so-called *interdisciplinary comparative studies*. While limiting to this kind of reflection the focus of the book becomes the question of “music *in literature*”, in other words: the question of “musicality of a literary work”.

Part I: *From non-musicality to musicality* has the nature of a review and recapitulation; this serves, on the one hand, to stress the specific form and the state of Polish post-war musical-literary studies, taken from the branch of literature (chapter 1: *Around Tadeusz Szulc’s “Muzyka w dziele literackim”* [*Music in a Literary Work*]), on the other – in further consequence – to theoretically isolate the problem matter of potential intertextual interferences. Different attempts to deal with the whole problem matter of “musicality of a literary work” in literary research applying metaphoric or even extremely metaphoric language undergo severe criticism. It is only in its consequence that literary intertextual references can not only be discussed critically but their most varied realisations at three textual levels can also be confronted there:

1. the sound sphere of a literary text (consciously formed in relation to music),
2. thematisation of music (especially presentation of a descriptive character),
3. musical structure, i.e. structure of a literary work created based on the interpretation of a scheme or musical technique.

The imprecise term “musicality” is also often used in the Polish literary research tradition to describe the three, basically different, aspects of music present in literature. Hence, to expose differences and to indicate unequivocal connections between spheres of relations of “three kinds of musicality of a literary work” (chapter 2: *Musicality – musicality of a literary work*) are theoretically determined. Musical influence on the form of the sound layer are conventionally formulated as *m u s i c a l i t y I*, making music a theme as *m u s i c a l i t y I I*, and musical structure as *m u s i c a l i t y I I I*.

The key question in the book, the question of musical structure in literature (musicality III), is discussed in the most elaborate part II: *Musical literary text*. Paradoxical in its essence, developing an idea of the structure requires separate research within the field of genology and provokes the equally paradoxical name: *m u s i c a l l i t e r a r y t e x t*; “musical” certainly not in the sense of use but the semantic features, in the sense – by a simple analogy – in which a literary text can be, for example, “philosophical”.

Coming out of the problems of making music a theme in literature, and more precisely: out of the literary problem of describing music in the novel *Le Coeur absolu* (1987) by Philippe Sollers (chapter 3: *Description of music /between the poetic variant and the interdisciplinary variant/*) one obtains varied interpretations of a musical pattern in given literary works, i.e. varied forms of musical literary text. The importance is precisely explained of an abstract typical model of a musical fugue in the cycle *Preludio e Fughe* (1928–1929) by Umberto Saba and in the work *Todesfuge* (1945) by Paul Celan (chapter 4: *Literary fugues...*), as well as the significance of palimpsestial reference to *Winterreise* by Schubert in the case of *Podróż zimowa* (1994) by Stanisław Barańczak (chapter 5: *Listen and read: two sources of one interpretation strategy...*).

Undoubtedly complex examples were selected, but not only because they seem characteristic, but also because from many perspectives they present perhaps the most interesting question – musicality III and its immanent connection with musicality I and musicality II. In *Le Coeur absolu* by Sollers there is also the problem of musicality I (technique of description; lengthened semantics of suspension points), musicality II (description of *Clarinet Quintet in A major* by Mozart, KV 581) and somehow musicality III (*Quintet* here is of similar importance to that of *The Divine Comedy* by Dante); in *Todesfuge* by Celan – musicality I (for example the complicated question of anacrusis and its possible connection with the musical definition of anacrusis), musicality II (title conotation) and, first of all musicality III (interpretation of the fugue form). In *Podróż zimowa* by Barańczak the very important problem of musicality I appears (for example literary interpretation of the melodic line of songs by Schubert), musicality II (nominal reference – taking over the musical title *Winterreise*) and the most important, musicality III (structure of single pieces of the cycle, which is revealed by the analysis of the last one, XXIV).

In part III: *At the borderline of arts* the two most borderline situations are considered, situations of musical-literary filiations – musical text in a drama and literary text in purely instrumental work. The notes included in *Judasz z Kariothu* by Karol Hubert Rostworowski (1936; I ed.: 1913, without the notes) reveal in detail both the musical structure of the scene in Annas' palace and quite unusual meaning of the verbal questions (chapter 6: *Score...*). The meaning is non-verbal and arises at the moment of actualisation of the rhythmicity of the whole scene in the stage space, at the moment of the author following detailed musical indications (in the analysis there are parallels to the stage experiments by Jean Tardieu, among others to his *Conversation-sinfonietta*, 1952). The text of *Scène* from *Hérodiade* by Mallarmé in the composition by Paul Hindemith "Hérodiade" de Stéphane Mallarmé (1944) – due to its specific functioning

beyond literature, his cunning hiding in the notes – makes it possible to notice exceptional verbal-musical connections, defined by the composer as an “orchestral recitation” (chapter 7: *Literature beyond literature...*). An attempt to interpret the phenomenon shows not the refined action to hide the literary text in the purely instrumental work (at three different levels of the score) but the true source of the conception of the musical text coexisting with the verbal text.

Gradual narrowing the problems in *Musicality of a Literary Work* and passing from too general a problem of “musicality” to “musicality of a literary work” (and further to “musical literary text”) is provoked by the unconventional character of literary realisations, referring to music. Regarding the unconventional character of performances of this type (specific singularity of artistic presentations) it is only possible to formulate complementary theories of a literary work and its relationship to music – in the way of unitary recognition of the musical intertext (or intertexts) and episodic analytical-interpretative actions. To conclude, potential intersemiotic relations extend not between literature and music, even not between literary works and compositions, but between a literary work and an artistic interpretation of a composition, form or musical technique. Since literature deals with different material, according to the rules of poetics, the basic difficulty is associated with perceiving purely literary phenomena which reveal connections with music.

Convictions about musical characteristics of a given literary text turn out to be divergent in many cases; in some literary works symptoms of interpreting music appear, but they escape the reader’s attention as not legible enough, too vague, in others they are only a misty effect (through the sphere of paratextuality, author’s comments, unverified interpretative hypothesis). The whole problem matter of the musicality of a literary work is not easy to define for the simple reason that intertextual references are argued in the rhetorical plane. The “literary fugues” under analysis, either in versions by Umberto Saba or by Paul Celan, undoubtedly have nothing in common with the material characteristic of music or with the musical form. However, considering certain rhetorical strategies some works can be analysed also in a musical context, making use of borrowed, although appropriately modified, terminology. Perhaps the most important conclusion following the above is: The risky term “musicality”, if applied in literary research at all, should not be adopted in its basic form or even in the sense of “musicality of literature”, but should be limited to the formulation “musicality of a literary work”.