

From the Editors

The essays in this volume explore various aspects of creative interconnections between literature, music, theatre and performance in 18th and 19th-century Britain, bringing an enhanced understanding of the literary texts that are discussed. They were presented at two interrelated Warsaw Literary Meetings in 2018: the first was dedicated to literature and music, the second – to literature, drama and performance. The essays adopt diverse critical standpoints and methodologies, demonstrating numerous interpretative possibilities of the themes, and have been arranged in two parts: “Music” and “Theatre and Performance.”

Pierre Dubois investigates – with a particular focus on such authors as Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Lawrence Sterne and Frances Burney – the meaning and role of musical references in the Georgian novel, arguing that, paradoxically, they both enrich and show the limitations of the novelist’s art. In the early Georgian novel of Richardson and Fielding, music is used to enact a moral and aesthetic classification of the characters and has no critical autonomy. As Pierre Dubois argues, its role is radically different in the novels of Sterne when words prove inadequate for expressing ideas or feelings since the novelist questions the ability of words to convey any accurate meaning. Conversely, in the novels of sensibility, especially those written by female authors (Radcliffe, Edgeworth, Burney) music often replaces speech as the best medium for the heroine to express herself. Maria Błaszkiwicz dissects George Frederic Handel’s adaptation of John Milton’s tragic closet drama *Samson Agonistes* (1671). She claims that in Handel’s Baroque three-act oratorio, which was designed with specifically theatrical objectives in mind, the tripartite thematic structure mirrors the design of Milton’s tragedy, allowing the composer to display his talent by a full spectrum of emotional appeal. Małgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołodys, in turn, examines musical imagery in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” *Alastor* and “To Constantia, Singing,” particularly in relation to the image of the Aeolian harp. The author also addresses the issue of the gender implications of the Aeolian lyre and feminisation of poetry and the poet in Shelley’s poetical works and literary criticism. Finally, Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska’s article analyses the complexity of soundscapes in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *The Old Nurse’s Story*

as well as the story's anti-patriarchal potential as an example of the Female Gothic.

The section on literature and the theatre opens with Jacek Mydla's article juxtaposing two plays – Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Horace Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* – to examine the relation of the Oedipal and the Gothic. He comes to surprising conclusion that *The Mysterious Mother* is "less gothic" than the *Oedipus*. Przemysław Uściński analyses the aesthetics of sentimentality in theatrical scenes from Henry Mackenzie's novel, *The Man of Feeling*. Connecting theatricality and hypocrisy he emphasises the contradictory character of sentimentality depicted in contemporary literature. On the one hand, the fashionable trend was claimed to portray and applaud inherent goodness and the sense of pity; on the other hand, it can be discussed as a set of highly conventionalised techniques of writing which dissimulate these moral sentiments. Marek Błaszak's article focuses on Captain Marryat's sea novels and forms of theatrical performance utilised as important elements of the plot, with Marryat's sailors taking the role of performers, mingling with professional actors and transforming a man-of-war into a floating playhouse. Andrzej Weseliński places under close scrutiny nineteenth-century theatrical adaptations of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, tracing the evolution of Victor Frankenstein's Creature on stage from an evil murderer to a respectable gentleman. Viewed from a broader perspective, the plays discussed in the article offer invaluable material for scholars working in the area of adaptation studies and, specifically, the theory and history of intermediality. In the final essay of the volume Magdalena Pypeć analyses the theatrical trope as a recurrent leitmotif in Dickens's last novel, by means of which the novelist works out his themes and the inherently dramatic structure. Theatrical tropes such as references to play-acting, pretending and assuming a disguise and other devices move the plot forward, develop characters, organise scenes and create the air of suspense and mystery in the narrative with a supposed foul crime in the centre.

Covering a wide selection of literary, musical and theatrical oeuvres as they do, the essays in the volume offer diverse interpretative insights into the interplay of British literature, music and theatre in the long 18th and 19th centuries. With their various ways of reading and examining poems, novels, plays and the oratorio they contribute to a more thorough understanding of how an interdisciplinary approach may enrich the interpretative potential of the works discussed.

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(editors)