



Ambient Literature (Abba, Butterworth, Dovey, Reddington. *c.* 2014) has come to describe a cluster of literary and (generalized) technological practices which actively engage the contextual and extra-textual apparatuses inherent in the meaningful function of literary works.¹

Taken together, such practices establish ambient literary works as nexus points for temporal,² historical, geographical, networked, psychological, and interpersonal trajectories producing, in more or less ergodic fashions, a hermeneutic oscillation between the foreground and background³ of post-phenomenological experience,⁴ highlighting the necessary dependence that meaningful actions have on the situations⁵ and stipulations⁶ of their enaction (writing, recording) and reception (reading, viewing, listening).⁷ Formulated as a trans-medial engagement⁸ with the situated/stipulated context of the reader (writ large), works of ambient literature reinscribe the occurrence of literary experience according to a spectral logic⁹ of an unbounded textuality across an errant¹⁰ lattice of both existent and non-existent materiality.¹¹ With this, audiences' sensory apparatuses are remediated¹² toward an ambiguity¹³ that reconstitutes the present moment¹⁴ of a re-factored world or, perhaps, more accurately, the present moment of a re-factored worlding, or even worldliness.¹⁵

This is to say that the open¹⁶ and variable work of Ambient Literature comes to bear responsibility for both itself and the reader, welcoming the world into itself and extending itself out into the world.¹⁷ In Ambient Literature, the limits of both reading¹⁸ and writing¹⁹ are engaged with a wider (and wilder), paratextual²⁰ world. It proposes a text which remains specific to the materials of its making²¹ even as they extend beyond the immediacy of the written or spoken word. As such, Ambient Literature

must be understood as a matter of circumscription, a meta-lexia within a wider field of potential intelligibility.²² It resists strict definition even as it is defined and remains open-ended, available to bring, either fully or in part, already-existent and new works into productive relation with its un-centre-ability. It is an idea open to continual renewal, defined by its responsiveness to emergent processes in literary and technological life.

Dr. Michael Marcinkowski & Dr. Matthew Hayler on behalf of the Ambient Literature team.

Notes

ām'bient, a. Surrounding (*the a. air*). [AMBI-, L *eo* go].

ETYMOLOGY. 1590S, 'surrounding, encircling,' from Latin *ambientem* (nominative *ambiens*) 'a going around,' present participle of *ambire* 'to go around, go about,' from *amb-* 'around' (see *ambi-*) & *ire* 'go' (see *ion*). The notion of 'going all around' led to the sense of 'encircling, lying all around.'

lit'erature, *n.*, books and written composition esp. of the kind valued for form and style, the production of these or their authors as a class, the realm of letters, the writings of a country of period. *the books &c.* treating of a subject. [LETTER].

ETYMOLOGY. Early 15c., 'book-learning,' from Latin *litteratura / litteratura* 'learning, a writing, grammar,' originally 'writing formed with letters,' from *littera / littera* 'alphabetic letter' also 'an epistle, writing, document; literature, great books; science, learning' (see Letter n.1). In English originally 'book learning' (in which sense it replaced Old English *boccræft*); the meaning 'activity of a writer, the profession of a literary writer' is first attested 1779 in Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*; that of 'literary productions as a whole, body of writings from a period or people' is first recorded 1812.

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