

# Incarnations of Material Textuality



Incarnations of Material Textuality:  
From Modernism to Liberateure

Edited by

Katarzyna Bazarnik and Izabela Curyłło-Klag

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Incarnations of Material Textuality:  
From Modernism to Liberateure,  
Edited by Katarzyna Bazarnik and Izabela Curyłło-Klag

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## EDITORS' NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present collection grew out of presentations given at two panels on liberature during international conferences: “Displaying Word & Image”—the 5<sup>th</sup> IAWIS Focus Conference at the University of Ulster in Belfast on 4-6 June 2010, and “Material Meanings”—the Third Biannual Conference of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies held at the University of Kent in Canterbury on 7-9 September 2012. These two meetings provided a spur to gather in one volume a selection of essays inspired by liberature—a theoretical proposal formulated by Polish poet, Zenon Fajfer, but picked up and elaborated by several international scholars interested in modernism, the avant-garde, and the materiality of literary works.

This project would not have been possible without other inspiring figures. So we wish to express our gratitude to dr Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, for her kind invitation to present liberature to Word&Image scholars during a separate panel and a book exhibition in Belfast and for her unfailing support for this publication, as well as to prof. David Ayers for hosting the liberature panel and another book exhibition at the University of Kent. Special thanks are also due to Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden of the Centre for Fine Print Research at the University of the West of England in Bristol; prof. Kathleen Walkup of Mills College, Oakland; Maddy Rosenberg of Central Booking, New York; David A. Goldfarb of Polish Cultural Insitute in New York; Miriam Schaer of Columbia College, Chicago; Anne-Dorothee Boehme of SAIC, Chicago; prof. Michał Paweł Markowski of University of Illinois, Chicago; prof. Susan Viguers of the University of the Arts, Philadelphia; Mr. Hung Hung of Taipei Poetry Festival; and prof. Mitsuyoshi Numano of the University of Tokyo for an opportunity to present liberature on the international forum.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:  
MODERNIST ROOTS OF LIBERATURE

KATARZYNA BAZARNIK

**Setting the context**

You can't cut off books written in 1934 from those written in 1920 or 1932 or 1832, at least you can't derive much advantage from a *merely* chronological category, though chronological relation may be important. If not that post hoc means propter hoc, at any rate the composition of books written in 1830 can't be due to those written in 1933, though the value of old work is constantly affected by the value of the new.

This is true not only of single works but of whole categories.  
(Pound 2010, 75-76)

Chronological sequences may not explain much; however, some aesthetic chemistry is activated whenever a new work appears that deliberately locates itself in a specific historical horizon. Modernism is definitely a period in which newly emerging works take a very self-conscious position in the movable mosaic of the literary heritage. Pound's compatriot and fellow poet, T. S. Eliot described this in a similar, and perhaps more articulate way:

(...) what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous

that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past (Eliot 1975, 38-39).

So Eliot claims that what happens in consequence of an addition is a kind of kaleidoscopic rearrangement of familiar and new elements that form a heretofore unrecognised pattern, a new, meaningful constellation of relations and possible influences, which reveals a set of correspondences that emerge when a newly arrived work inspires us to look at the past from a different angle. This, I believe, can happen not only with individual works, but also with whole categories, as Pound suggests. Such a reshuffling is described in this collection.

The essays gathered here focus on relations between modernist practices of writing embedded in the materiality of language, and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century theory and practice of liberature, a concept of a literary genre proposed by Polish poet Zenon Fajfer, theoretically developed by the undersigned, and put to use by scholars contributing to this volume<sup>1</sup>. They attempt to sketch a line running from selected modernist writers, forerunners or forefathers of the approach defined here as liberatic to contemporary creators of liberature, to point out how in the course of the last hundred years materiality of writing has become recognised as a legitimate aspect of the literary work.

But as Pound indicates, were one to draw such a line, it would have to appear rather Shandean. A writerly engagement with the material shape of the literary work can be traced backwards and forwards in history without an obvious and straightforward continuation. It could loop back into the past to include Laurence Sterne with his playful use of the printing conventions in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-66), William Blake's carefully handcrafted, illuminated volumes, and Thackeray's self-illustrated novels, and especially his first edition of *The History of Henry Esmond* (1853), which he deliberately fashioned as an eighteenth century print. Going beyond the Anglophone sphere, it would embrace Stéphane Mallarmé, the visionary of *Le Livre* and the author of *Un Coup de Des* (1897, 1914), Blaise Cendrars's and Sonia Delaunay-Terk's *La Prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France* (1913) in its original, first edition, as well as many books and booklets written, designed and printed by Russian Constructivists, Polish

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the essays gathered here are based on presentations given during two panels devoted to liberature at "Displaying Word and Image", 5<sup>th</sup> IAWIS Focus Conference at the University of Ulster in Belfast in 2010, and "Material Meanings", the Third Biannual Conference of the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury in 2012.

or Italian futurists, to name only a few examples. A flash forward would embrace some postmodernist novels, in particular authored by writers who have exploited the *mise-en-page* and composition of the whole volume, such as Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* and *Voice in the Closet*, Ronald Sukenick's *Out*, William H. Gass's *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife*, and practically all of B.S. Johnson's oeuvre. A considerable number of so-called experimental fiction, and a few artists' books would qualify, too. Then the last decades have brought a wave of writing that incorporates non-verbal components into its narrative repertoire; suffice it to mention Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005) and *The Tree of Codes* (2010), or Steven Hall's *Raw Shark Texts* (2007). In Poland *Oka-leczenie* (Mute-I-Late; 2000) and *(O)patrzenie* (Ga(u)ze; 2003) by Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer, and Radosław Nowakowski's books joined the line.

The publication of these works in the early 2000's triggered off a literary movement, a theoretical reflection and a series of practical initiatives<sup>2</sup> that have become associated with the term "liberature." But the spur to formulate the concept came from working on *Oka-leczenie* [Mute-I-Late] and *(O)patrzenie* [Ga(u)ze], which had given myself and Zenon Fajfer a chance to ponder not only stylistic choices, but also questions of typography and *mise-en-page*, the architecture of the book, and the potential resting in the defiance of dominant editorial conventions. Consequently, Fajfer's unorthodox vision of literature, combined with my background as a literary scholar resulted in a proposition to distinguish a genre that is inherently rooted in its printed medium not by editorial practices but by a deliberate authorial engagement with the materiality of writing. The idea was first formulated in the article entitled "Liberature. An Appendix to the Dictionary of Literary Terms" (Fajfer 1999),<sup>3</sup> which with time came to be perceived as the manifesto of the new literary genre and the literary movement.

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<sup>2</sup> They included the opening of the Liberature Reading Room in 2002, now hosted in the Main Library of Małopolska Province in Kraków, and launching a publishing series of the Krakow-based publishing house Korporacja Ha!art in 2003. See also footnote 6 below.

<sup>3</sup> The article was originally published in 1999 in Polish in the literary magazine *Dekada Literacka* (5-6, 30 June 1999, 8-9). Its English translation appeared in Fajfer's bilingual collection of essays *Liberature or Total Literature* (2010). All quotes from the article are referenced to this edition. However, since the essays are not easily available, the editors have decided to include it, along with two other of Fajfer's most quoted essays, in the Appendix in this volume.

## The manifestos

This is true not only of single works but of whole categories. Max Ernst's designs send a great deal of psychological novel writing into the discard. The cinema supersedes a great deal of second-rate narrative, and a great deal of theatre. (...)

In all cases one test will be, 'could this material have been made more efficient in some other medium?'

This statement is simply an extension of the 1914 Vorticist manifesto (Pound 2010, 76).

Coining the name of the newly formulated category after the Latin word for "book", Fajfer argued that the material volume should be seen as an integral component of the literary work if its physique is deliberately designed by the writer as part of his or her intended meaning. He believed that the materiality of language could be a source of revitalisation of "the exhausted field" of writing (Fajfer 2010, 23), and pointed out that it is grounded in the spatial architecture of the book. Reflecting on space of the literary work he noted that:

(...) the first, elementary space one deals with, even before one starts reading a work, is (...) an actual book—a material object. The outward appearance of the book, the number and arrangement of its pages (if there need to be pages), the kind of cover (if there need to be a cover)—this is the space of the literary work that includes all its other spaces. And, unlike those other spaces, this space is very real. (Fajfer 2010, 26)

This material space can be a part of the setting on a par with other components of the fictional world created through language. Spatial and visual features of the printed medium can be used as a vehicle for meaning complementing the linguistic one. Fajfer argued that typography, layout, illustrations, and the overall structure of the material book can be implemented as means of expression that can come into a dialogue with meanings conveyed through words, and postulated that contemporary authors could and should fruitfully incorporate them in their poetics:

Shouldn't the shape of the cover, shape and direction of the writing, format, colour, the number of pages, words, and even letters be considered by the writer just like any other element of his work, an element requiring as much attention as choosing rhymes and thinking up a plot? (Fajfer 2010, 25)

In short, he called for legitimisation of non-verbal, material means of expression, and for unity of the "physical and spiritual aspects of the

literary work (...) [that] should complement each other to create a harmonious effect” (Fajfer 2010, 25), that is, for using devices so conspicuously employed in the Vorticist manifesto Pound mentions in the excerpt quoted above.

That manifesto was originally published in the first issue of Wyndham Lewis’s ephemeral *Blast* in June 1914.<sup>4</sup> The issue opens with the Preliminary declaring that “*Blast* sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way” (“Long Live...” 1914, 7). The vividness and violence are graphically signalled already before one starts reading the actual words: initially by the bright pinkish purple (or violet) of the cover with heavy block type running diagonally across the whole space and the large format of the magazine, then by dynamic typography inside it—each point in the list forming the Preliminary is framed in a box, and the sentences that need to be emphasised are set in bold **CAPITALS**. The actual Manifesto,<sup>5</sup> which contains “the violent and vivid ideas”, is printed in heavy block letters of varied sizes, arranged in a dynamic way, as if pounding the pages or shouting in the readers’ face (see Fig. 1-1).

Though the magazine had only two issues, and its actual impact on contemporary readership was rather meagre, it grew into a legendary piece, recalled with nostalgia by those who contributed to it, and has attracted much scholarly attention, not least because its conspicuous appearance (Hickman 2005, 32-36). Miranda Hickman, who offers a comprehensive review of critical reactions to the magazine, cites a number of critics such as William Wees, Richard Cork, Hugh Kenner, or Marjorie Perloff among others, to illustrate the importance of its visual and material rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> Hence, for example, “Wees underscores that *Blast* exerted its impact through appearance—its ‘cover, size, and typography’—asserting its significance by way of its physical difference from other similar

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<sup>4</sup> It is also discussed by Izabela Curyłło-Klag in Chapter Three.

<sup>5</sup> In fact there are two manifestos: one on pp. 11-28, the other on pp. 30-43 of *Blast*.

<sup>6</sup> Hickman quotes the following sources commenting on the striking appearance of *Blast*: William Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1972), Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1976), Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1986), Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905–1920* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 2001), Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1954), and also his *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1971).

projects”, such as *Poetry* and the *Little Review* (Hickman 2005, 31). She stresses “the magazine’s impressiveness as physical object”, its “rhetoric of substantial physicality”, and the critics’ impressions “of the magazine as a kind of freestanding entity—a building, perhaps, towering above neighboring edifices” (Hickman 2005, 31-32). She manages to demonstrate how the magazine has been perceived as a kind of architectural object, and achieved “a status as a remarkably substantial artifact” (Hickman 2005, 30). There is no doubt that all these features: aggressive colour, aggressive, large fonts, and a large format, were deliberately designed by Lewis as the chief editor to produce an effect of a visual explosion in the face of the surprised audience, intended to shock and to communicate a sense of rebellion, but also—perhaps—to educate them in reading the new, modern style. So, as Hickman notes, “physical stature is conceptually linked with and used to connote the ‘stature’ of eminence” Lewis and Pound envisaged for their movement. This non-verbal rhetoric has worked well with to scholars; for them

(...) these physical characteristics are attractive because, in bold, comprehensible strokes, they paint what critics have often wanted to understand as the story of modernism’s beginnings: they appear to mark a desirably legible origin to the modernist call for revolution. (Hickman 2005, 36)

Simply, *Blast* shows vividly what it says, and because of its material distinctiveness it can serve as a graphic illustration or landmark of the turning point in the literary history. In other words, the layout of the magazine iconically reflects ideas expressed in words, and becomes an inseparable part of the ideological statements the manifestos make, thereby fulfilling the criteria Fajfer postulates for liberature.

So what back then, in 1914, Lewis and his collaborators had demonstrated in practical terms in *Blast*, and what Fajfer himself had already put to use in the unconventionally structured, poetic narrative of *Oka-leczenie*<sup>7</sup>, the Polish poet theorised in his article, arguing that writers should be at liberty to use the material features of the print as a kind of non-verbal rhetoric (thereby also hinting at “freedom”, the other Latin root of his coinage<sup>8</sup>). For scholars who responded to it his words reverberated

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<sup>7</sup> An in-depth reading of both the verbal and the material content of the book is offered by Agnieszka Przybyszewska in Chapter Six.

<sup>8</sup> Later, following Wojciech Kalaga’s suggestion, I pointed out yet another Latin undertone associated with “libra”, i.e., scales, suggesting a balance of verbal and non-verbal components in such a work (Bazarnik 2002, v).



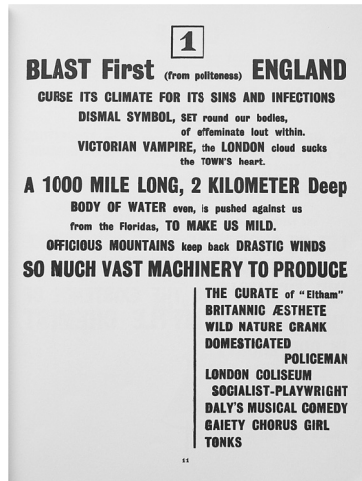


Fig.1-1. An excerpt from the Vorticist Manifesto in *Blast* 1 (1914), page 11, by permission of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust (a registered charity).

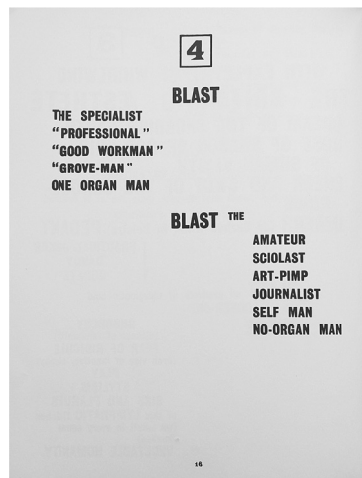


Fig.1-2. An excerpt from the Vorticist Manifesto in *Blast* 1 (1914), page 16, by permission of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust (a registered charity).

with modernist ideas;<sup>9</sup> the novelty was that he resorted to the concept of genre—the concept seemingly of little use in the era of liquid modernity.<sup>10</sup> Yet, affinities with the predecessors were clear enough, and they will be further elaborated on in the following part of the chapter.

### **The bibliographical code or the body of the book**

All the material features of the book mentioned by Fajfer can be subsumed under “the bibliographical code”, the term introduced by Jerome McGann in *The Textual Condition* (1991) to define the kind of signifying code set to work, beside the linguistic code, through “the physique” of the literary work. But the scholar considers a deliberate, writerly use of the bibliographical code for expressive purpose exceptional (1991, 57). However, only two years later in *The Black Riders. The Visible Language of Modernism* (1993) he presents a whole range of poets who were deeply involved in shaping the physique of their works, which seems much less marginal than he had initially implied. It is in the Aesthetic movement and in modernism that he identifies and analyses a similar kind of rhetoric of the material book that Fajfer characterises as the poetics of liberature.<sup>11</sup> He

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<sup>9</sup> Liberatura is located in the context of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde and interpreted as its contemporary continuation in Chapter Two “Poza regułami” (Beyond Rules and Norms) of *Po polsku*, the literature, language and communication textbook for middle schools, L. Adrabińska-Pacula et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne PWN, 2011), 64-66. See also B. Śniecikowska *Słowo—Obraz—Dźwięk. Literatura i sztuki wizualne w koncepcjach awangardy polskiej 1918-1939* (Krakow: Universitas, 2005; 72, 79, 412), and Emiliano Ranocchi in Chapter Seven of this volume.

<sup>10</sup> Fajfer’s proposal to see the materially grounded writing as a distinct genre was first briefly expounded in terms of “the horizon of expectations” in my article “What’s in a Name”, and then theoretically developed in K. Bazarnik “Liberature: a New Literary Genre?” (in *Insistent Images. Iconicity in Language and Literature*, eds. E. Tabakowska, C. Ljungberg and O. Fischer. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007) 191-206, and “Liberature or on the Origin of (Literary) Species” (in Fajfer 2010) 151-163.

<sup>11</sup> A similar recognition of non-verbal, iconic devices, ranging from the foregrounding of single letters up to the compositional space of the whole book, appears in C. D. Malmgren’s *Fictional Spaces in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1985). The author states that such experimentation with the materiality of discourse, though often seen as a mere gimmick, in fact “constitutes an attempt to multiply the types of spaces available for signification” and belongs to a repertoire of (icono)graphic means of expression used by writers (Malmgren 1985, 46).

notes how “[i]n modernist writing the aesthetic space begins to turn into writing space”, and claims that this turn marks a significant yet underexplored step in the history of literature (McGann 1993, 178). Drawing on Yeats, Pound, Stein, as well as Dickinson and Morris and some contemporary American poets, McGann demonstrates how authors utilise “expressive book design” to add meaning to verbal contents, to express their attitude to the literary tradition, to locate their own work in it, and to make the graphic presentation of their texts reflect their ideas and ideologies (McGann 1993, 80).

For example, he analyses typography of three subsequent editions of Pound’s *Cantos*, showing how they were gradually changing to reflect the author’s values and views on relations between aesthetics, economy and politics. The first two: *A Draft of XVI Cantos*, published in 1925, and *A Draft of the Cantos 17-27* of 1928, used the modernised Caslon typeface, but “all the titles recall medieval calligraphy or decorative printing” in a kind of “antique allusion” to masters of the past, enhanced by ornamental initials and graphic inserts resembling woodcuts of early printed books; moreover, the first edition uses black and red ink to hint at the Kelmscott Press publications (McGann 1993, 79). McGann believes that such a visual tension corresponds to the content of the poems in which the past (e.g., Homer’s *Odyssey* in “Canto I”) is revived and retold in a modern context (first in the Renaissance in Latin translation and publication of Homer’s epic;<sup>12</sup> then in Pound’s own poem). As he explains:

The stylistic contrast between [Pound’s] books’ ornament and typography map the history he is interested in. The pages of these books recollect at the design level the epochal (bibliographical) events of the fifteenth century and the late nineteenth century. The *Cantos* project locates itself within that historical nexus. (McGann 1993, 80)

So the physique of these texts constitutes a kind of object lesson on how to recycle and recirculate ideas and topoi. Douglas Mao, in turn, notices that in these early *Cantos* Pound often makes explicit references to the “thingness and opacity of books”, and points out that the poet’s distance towards the predominant ideology of the world contemporary to the poet is marked by both the verbal content and the material form of his editions (Mao 1998, 170). So he also interprets their bibliographic code as a deliberate, meaningful gesture of the author.

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<sup>12</sup> Homer’s *Odyssey* in Andreas Divus’ Latin translation printed by Christian Wechel in Venice in 1538 (Shucard et al. 1990, 131).

However, the 1930's edition of *A Draft of XXX Cantos* clearly marks a significant shift in Pound's vision of his literary project. The book retains the Caslon font, but uses geometrical, "Vorticist" initials to mark his move towards modernism, which he helped to initiate. Hence, McGann concludes,

The physical presentation of these three books thus constitutes a display of their meanings. Book design here defines not merely the immediate horizon of Pound's *Cantos* project, it declares the meaningfulness of historical horizons as such. In doing this, the work equally declares its commitment to a fully materialized understanding of language. The *Cantos* summons up the power and authority of the most elementary forms of language, its system of signifiers, and it apprehends these signifiers as historical artifacts. The graphic presentation of Pound's books is thus made an index of their aims. Through book design Pound makes an issue of language's physique, deliberateness, and historicity (McGann 1993, 80).

No wonder that in *ABC of Reading* Pound resorts to the visual rhetoric again, offering his readers a lesson not only in the "history" of great literary works, schools and movements, but also in the use of typographic devices. Browsing the pages of his book, one is aware that this is the author conscious of the expressive potential of print. When in the chapter entitled "BASIS" he describes the juicy sound value of language in Shakespeare's "GREAT AGE," when "the auditor liked the WORDS", he visually accents significant phrases (Pound 2010, 71-76). He acts as an expert graphic designer who in a few swift, metaphorical brushstrokes sketches a panorama of great literature, using paragraphs of alternating length, **bold**, CAPITAL or *italicised* typefaces to draw the readers' attention to significant details. In *Textual Condition* McGann also comments on the "physical aspects" of *ABC of Reading*, describing them as "dramatic." He claims that Pound's text resembles a 'how-to manual' in which not only his argument, a series of examples ("Exhibits") but also the very formatting and typography of the book foreground points the author is making (McGann 1991, 105). Using them as visual markers, Pound as if puts to work the method he described later in his *Guide to Kulchur*:

(...) I occasionally cause the reader "to see." (...) That being the point of the writing. That being the reason for presenting first one facet and then another—I mean to say the purpose of the writing is to reveal the subject. The ideogramic method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register (Pound 1970, 51).

Pound's description of the writing and reading processes resembles viewing a sculpture or a building from different angles, perceived by the beholder in a movement and interaction with their spatial volume. Indeed, Miranda Hickman associates his interest in the physicality of his books with architecture, especially with works of Sigismondo Malatesta. Pound, she claims, looked for a comparable discipline in poetry as the one embodied in the exquisite temple, a formal discipline that could be achieved through careful design. According to her, that desire was responsible for his attempt to visually relate his 1920's editions of *Cantos* to the style of Malatesta's *Tempi* (Hickmann 2005, 122). In this context it is interesting to note that Mao cites Pound admiring Malatesta for an attempt to embody his ideas in the work of art: "If the Tempio is a jumble and a junk-shop, it nevertheless registers a concept. There is no other single man's effort equally registered (2)," (Pound from *Guide to Kulchur*, in Mao 1998, 168).

Using an architectural metaphor, Vicky Mahaffey sees such "[a]n understanding of text as monumental" and recognises that this may be associated with writers trying to assert their position as the major agents in the creation of their work. In the age when the collaborative character of publishing and marketing literature became blatantly obvious, she speculates that it was a way to confirm

(...) the authority of the author over that of his or her readers, the authority of the individual over that of the public, the authority of the genius over collaborative production and reproduction, the authority of preservation over decomposition, and the authority of the conscious will (intention) over the authority of unconscious need and desire (chance) (Mahaffey 1991, 178).<sup>13</sup>

Such totality of vision, its embodiment in the book, which appears as a kind of modernist *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the supremacy of the author over the publishing team are precisely the aspects of modernist textuality that liberature can relate itself to. Fajfer also stresses liberatic work as "language incarnate", the writer's involvement in its shaping, and calls for respecting the "intentionality of the authored work" in the editorially unmodified shape. His postulates also describe practices in which "the spatial features of the page and the book" are used as "resources for poetic

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<sup>13</sup> Mahaffey's article concerns issues in editing Joyce's *Ulysses*—as is well known Joyce was also deeply involved in the production of his works. More on this in S. Slot *Ulysses in the Plural: the Variable Editions of Joyce's Novel* (Dublin: the National Library of Ireland, 2004).

effects” (McGann 1993, 81). Interestingly, when he was asked to write about the body for an issue of cultural and literary magazine *Portret*, he focused on the body of the book, and drew in his reflections on a modernist classic—Joyce’s *Ulysses*:

Literature is full of descriptions of bodies. Beautiful and ugly and just so-so. Full of descriptions and of bodies. Full-fleshed, cow-eyed, fleet-footed. Written and unwritten. Brought to life by the imagination of a poet, the voice of a singer, and the ear of a listener, fed by the imagination of a reader. For those bodies the word is only a placenta, a chrysalis from which a butterfly emerges.

Sometimes a description is not enough: then the description itself wants to be a body. The word wants to be flesh, to be writing indecently nontransparent, visible, not only audible. STATELY and **plump**. Flesh, not (a placenta). (The book is to be that).

But not all books want to be (that). Some books themselves want to Be. A Body for reading. To Be a literary work no less fleshy than the hand that turns its pages. Or rather a **liberary** work. To Be for reading with the eyes, ears, and hands; for seeing, hearing and touching (Fajfer 2010, 81)

While emphasising the *Ulyssean* allusions typographically, he also explicitly comments on Joyce’s use of typography, page layout and punctuation, or rather the lack of it that “fleshes out” the final episode of the novel, as factors contributing to corporeality of Joyce’s book. But the modernist inspiration is already made clear in Fajfer’s 1999 “manifesto” in which he mentions the Irishman as one of the great visionaries of “the Book” who had inspired his reflection on writing (Fajfer 2010, 22-23). He admires the “Liber Lord”<sup>14</sup> for his perfecting “the poetics of adjusting form to content to a rare degree”, for employing “the symbolists’ principle of speaking indirectly and through suggestions with Mallarméan mastery” (Fajfer 2010, 73), and for totality of vision in *Ulysses*, but even more so in *Finnegans Wake* (Fajfer 2010, 22-23). His description of Joyce’s achievement resembles B. S. Johnson’s appreciation of the Irish master insofar as both writers stress Joyce’s use of the novelistic medium, apparently attracted by his “precise use of language, [and] exploitation of the technological fact of the book” (Johnson 1973, 11). It is then telling that, just as Fajfer, the British novelist also resorted to the rhetoric of the bibliographical code to revitalise his stylistic repertoire.

Seen as a literary movement, in turn, liberature also demonstrates affinities to modernism. It entails a comparable resistance to the

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<sup>14</sup> The phrase features in *Finnegans Wake* (1975, 250.20). On liberatic aspects of Joyce’s oeuvre see my *Joyce and Liberature* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2012).

commercialised, mass market driven publishing, a deep belief in the authors' freedom of aesthetic choices, and a desire to create a "total work" whose every element would be expressive of the author's intentions, as those of Kelmscott Press, which McGann brings up as a formative context for Pound and other modernists (1993, 45-75), and later by small modernist, independent presses. In fact, "Liberatura", an imprint of a non-commercial publishing house Ha!art,<sup>15</sup> seems to play a similar role by providing a niche for conceptually (and often technologically) demanding, authorial works in the present day Poland. So it is both in its philosophy and in related practices that liberature is related to modernism. As Emiliano Ranocchi notes, it can be seen as a modernist project at the heart of the postmodernity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The publishing house is a part of Korporacja Ha!art activities aimed at supporting and promoting contemporary culture, new media art, and critical theory, Korporacja being a self-ironic name of this NGO. "Liberatura" is one of its publishing lines. So far over twenty titles have been published under this imprint, including such highlights as Polish translations of S. Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, G. Perec's *La vie mode d'emploi*, H. Müller's collage poetry in a box *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm*, and J. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (for the full list see <http://www.ha.art.pl/wydawnictwo/linie-wydawnicze/liberatura>).

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## CHAPTER TWO

# BOOK AS A NEW GENRE: THE BOOK ILLUSTRATIONS OF BRUNO SCHULZ

ARIKO KATO

### Introduction

Bruno Schulz (1892-1942) was a Polish-Jewish writer today regarded as one of the most distinguished writers of twentieth century Poland. He was in fact an artist as well as a writer, and he started his career as an artist around 1920. In the 1930s, he published two collections of short stories: *Sklepy cynamonowe* (*Cinnamon Shops*, 1933) and *Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą* (*Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, 1937). The second book was published with 33 illustrations and a book cover made by Schulz himself. We know from his letter that he had also intended to illustrate his first book. He described his vision for this book in a letter to his friend dated July 24, 1933:

The frontispiece I will draw myself. I have been thinking of illustrating this book with woodcuts [drzeworyty] inserted into the body of the text, like books of the early nineteenth century; but I don't know if I am going to do it. (Ficowski 1988, 40).

The plan was not to be realized, as the publisher opposed it. Schulz designed only the book cover. The publisher's decision to decline the author's proposal was probably reasonable. Schulz was still an unknown writer, and the publication was made possible by the support of his older brother, Izydor, who was the director of the Lviv branch of the "Galicia" oil company. After the success of Schulz's first book, *The Cinnamon*

*Shops*<sup>1</sup>, the same publisher allowed the author to add illustrations to his second book, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, which was published by the same company, Rój, and even offered him an honorarium equal to 15% of the sales (Chmurzyński 1995, 111).

An additional episode evidences Schulz's on-going concern about illustrating his books. A friend of his recounts that Schulz made cliché-verre works in the early 1920s, which were later included in his representative graphic works, titled *The Idolatrous Book*, as illustrations for Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs* (1870). However, it was not popular to illustrate novels in the interwar period in Poland. Why he was so interested in illustrations? Schulz's letter, quoted above, tells us what kind of illustrations he anticipated, or dreamed of. He was thinking of illustration in terms of "books of the early nineteenth century," when many novels in Western Europe were published with illustrations. The lithograph, invented at the end of eighteenth century, had begun to be used for book illustrations, but woodcuts were still a welcome approach to illustrations at that time. Based on the letter and the fact that the word "drzeworyt," which Schulz used when originally writing in Polish, is used for both "wood cut" and "wood engraving," it seems that he thought of the illustrations as wood engravings.<sup>2</sup> The printing block used for wood engraving is so hard that the image could be printed with printing type. Thus, the illustrations could be located on a page without any visible framework around them. As a result, cost of printing decreased, and the number of illustrations increased. Moreover, the semantic relationship between texts and illustrations was strengthened (Blewett 1995; Ienari 1995). This gives us reason to assume that Schulz thought of illustration as closely related to text. However, his vision of a novel is unusual for the 1930s, if we consider his vision in comparison to other books published at that time.

Schulz, having lived in Vienna intermittently during the First World War, would have known secessionists' art books made under the influence

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<sup>1</sup> This collection of short stories appeared in English translation of Celina Wieniewska as *The Street of Crocodiles* (1963).

<sup>2</sup> However, Schulz did not know how to make woodcuts or at least was not adept at this technique. In a letter dated 24 March 1934, he asks one of his friends to teach him the woodcut technique when they next meet, see: Bruno Schulz, *Księga listów*, ed. Jerzy Ficowski (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2002), 61. On 6 October 1935, he wrote to another friend, "As for illustrations, I haven't illustrated *Cinn. Shops*, I only have plans to, and for that I intend to learn how to make woodcuts"; see: Jerzy Ficowski, ed., *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 103.

of William Morris. Compared with these trends, Schulz's vision of illustration, or any book with such illustrations after "the early nineteenth century," seems very traditional. Studies of Schulz's works have not yet analysed his illustrations in detail.<sup>3</sup> This may have been because editions of *Sanatorium* published after WWII did not reproduce all the illustrations it originally contained. While some foreign editions did use illustrations, they selected only a few that directly correspond to the stories. Consequently, his illustrations have never been examined as they were printed in the original space of the book.

In 1937, after sending the finished manuscripts of *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass* to his publisher, Schulz wrote to his friend:

They came to 270 pages; with the 33 illustrations it will make about 300 pages. I am very concerned about the plates, fearing that Rój [the publisher of *Sanatorium*—A.K.] might ruin them (Ficowski 1988, 64).

In spite of his anxiety, *Sanatorium* appeared with 33 illustrations and a book cover designed by him. The total pages numbered 263, which suggests that the finished book met Schulz's intention.

Most of his illustrations correspond with typical understandings of illustration, mimetically depicting scenes narrated in the accompanying text. However, some illustrations do not correspond to descriptions in the stories. These illustrations, which give the impression of dissonance when we are reading the book, are the clues to understanding Schulz's specific concept of book illustration.

### **Illustrations for "The Book"**

Take as an example the short story titled "The Book." This story, which opens *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, has only two illustrations, both of which have quite a similar composition (see Fig. 2-

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<sup>3</sup> The portfolio of the illustrations Schulz made for his novel was edited and published by Jerzy Ficowski. This portfolio includes not only illustrations printed in the collection of short stories, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, but also unpublished illustrations and illustrations added to short stories published separately in journals prior to being included in the book. However, not all the illustrations Schulz made were printed in this book. Some articles discuss his illustrations; see for example: Bożena Schallcross, "Pencil, Pen, and Ink: Bruno Schulz's Art of Interference," in *Heart of the Nation: Polish Literature and Culture*, eds. James S. Pula and M. B. Biskupski (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 57-68, and Seweryna Wyslouch, "Ilustracja autorska – casus Brunona Schulza," *Teksty drugie* 3 (15) (1992), 116-122.

1, Fig. 2-2). Usually we do not use similar images as illustrations in a single book. Was this a mistake on the part of Schulz or his editor? Considering the two illustrations as a pair shows that they were created as the author intended.

Both illustrations depict an old man playing a hand organ in the street, looking up to the people who are listening to his music on a veranda. The first illustration (Fig. 2-1) is placed beside the description of an advertisement for instruments. We read about “hand organs, beautifully painted, carried on the backs of little gray old men, whose indistinct faces, corroded by life seemed covered by cobwebs—faces with watery, immobile eyes slowly leaking away (...)” (Schulz, 2008, 122). Therefore, as usual illustrations often do, the first one mimetically visualizes the descriptions in the text.

Besides, we cannot overlook Schulz’s self-portrait, standing behind a boy, who seems to be Józef, the story’s first-person narrator. Schulz’s short stories are known for being autobiographical (for example, the family make-up is the same in his real life as in his short stories), and the narrator’s figure overlaps with that of the young Schulz. In this way, Schulz uses the illustration as a meta-fictional device, introducing a self-reflective feature into the story. We can observe that all the figures except Schulz’s portrait are watching the organ player. They live in the closed space of the illustrated world, but the figure portraying Schulz looks directly at the readers. This type of self-portrait of the author watching the viewers has a precedent in Western history of painting, and serves to draw the viewers’ attention to the painting and what is happening in it. Schulz, putting a self-portrait within the illustration, reminds his readers of the presence of the omniscient author who controls the narrator and the stories.

The second illustration (Fig. 2-2), appearing four pages later, presents a composition similar to the first. However, there is a definitive difference between the two. Schulz’s self-portrait disappears in the second. Also, the faces of the organ player, the woman and the boy on the veranda, have changed. Figures of children have been added to the street. The text nearby tells us how to read this image:

The Authentic [The Book—A.K.] lives and grows. What does this mean? Well, perhaps next time, when we open our old script, we may not find Anna Csillag and her devotees in their old place. Perhaps we shall see her, the long-haired pilgrim, sweeping with her cloak the roads of Moravia, wandering in a distant land, through white villages steeped in prose and drabness, and distributing samples of Elsa’s balm to God’s simpletons who suffer from sores and itches (Schulz 2008, 125-126).

This passage describes the characteristics of *The Book*, starting with a capital letter, which is the main motif of this short story. *The Book* is described in the story as a kind of the idea of a book which includes all books that exist, have existed, or will exist. Anna Csillag is featured in an illustrated advertisement for hair pomade, an advertisement which has already been mentioned earlier in the text. In this fragment, she reappears, but this time as a heroine of another advertisement for the balsam called *Elsa-fluid*, which has also already been mentioned. The text around the second illustration describes how characters in different advertisements transgress the boundaries of the advertising form, coming out and going freely into *The Book*, which Schulz intentionally begins with the capital letter.

Therefore, the two similar illustrations depict what is written about in the text. They constitute a series and demonstrate that no boundary separates the seemingly different stories and that all the stories are simply parts of *The Book*. “The Authentic is alive and grows” (Schulz 2008, 125), or as, we read two pages later, “it unfolds while being read, its boundaries open to all currents and fluctuations” (Schulz 2008, 127). Together, the illustrations visually demonstrate the concept of *The Book*, which the story describes, constituting a meaningful pair.

### Illustrations for “Eddie” (“Edzio”)

We can find a similar pair of illustrations in the short story “Eddie” (Fig. 2-3, Fig. 2-4). Both of these illustrations portray people sitting and standing around a table. The difference between them is the number of people depicted. The first one depicts eight people (Fig. 2-3) and the other seven (Fig. 2-4). Again, Schulz’s self-portrait is at the root of this discrepancy. In the first illustration, his portrait is drawn in the centre of the table. This means that, as in the illustration for the short story “*The Book*,” he is looking at the readers directly without paying attention to the others in his company. The self-portrait is not present in the second illustration.

Unlike the illustrations from “*The Book*,” these illustrations have no corresponding scenes or descriptions in the story. However, if we regard them as a pair, they appear to demonstrate a thesis put forward near the second illustration, at the end of “Eddie”:

And the process of sleeping is, in fact, one great story, divided into chapters and sections, into parts distributed among sleepers. When one of them stops and grows silent, another takes up his cue so that the story can proceed in broad, epic zigzags (...) (Schulz 2008, 286).

Though this is a description of sleep, we can still discern Schulz's views on story/history (Schulz used the word "historia" in Polish, which can have both meanings). This passage suggests that each history is only a part of the overall story. A story narrated by someone is only a continuation of other people's stories, and it can continue as a new story told by still others. The two illustrations, as a pair, visually demonstrate that the story continues, even when the author—Schulz—disappears.

In fact, the first person narrator, who so far has been a boy named Joseph (Józef in Polish) since the beginning of the book, changes into a retired old man called "Simon" (Szymcio in Polish) in the next short story. Entitled "The Old-Age Pensioner," it begins just after the second illustration (Fig. 2-5) with the following way: "I am an old-age pensioner in the true and full meaning of the word, very far advanced in that estate, an old pensioner of high proof" (Schulz 2008, 287).

As the above passage shows, Schulz emphasises maximally the change in the narrator. All elements—namely illustrations, text, and the order of stories—interact with each other, demonstrating that the narrative "I" has changed but the story will be taken up by another "I" and continued.

We cannot overlook Schulz's self-portrait in the illustration placed at the beginning of this story. By this placement, Schulz visually demonstrates that the narrator has changed, but that the author of these texts has not changed. He continues to operate these stories under the mask of the narrative "I."

## **Illustrations of a Horse-drawn Carriage**

Considered in this context, the two illustrations depicting a horse-drawn carriage that appear in the short stories *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass* (Fig. 2-6) and *Father's Last Escape* (Fig. 2-7) serve as symbolic visualizations of what the stories narrate. The scenes depicted in neither illustration correspond directly to the text, though they also portray a carriage drawn by two horses that are running away with their backs to the readers. On the carriage, behind the coachman, there are two naked women sitting, and one of them is gazing at us, the viewers. We know from Schulz's open letter to Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, published in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*Illustrated Weekly*) in 1935, that the image of a horse carriage is like the *ur*-image or the source of his imagining (Schulz 1989, 442). However, these images did not simply originate from his imagination, but were more connected to the texts.