

**Katarzyna Bazarnik
(& Zenon Fajfer)**

LIBERATURE

Literature in The Form of The Book

This is an edited version of the talk given at the conference “Traditional and emerging formats of artists books: Where do we go from here?”, at the School of Creative Arts, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK, on 10th July 2009. The talk traces the development of *liberature* (Polish *liberatura*, from Latin *liber*, i.e. 'book'), a literary genre that integrates text and its material foundation into a meaningful whole. But it is the writer who intentionally shapes the form of the book to suit the text. The spur to propose liberature as a genre different from artists' books and concrete poetry came from a self-reflection on form, space, as well as the book and text as literary media, when we were working on our triple-volume book *Oka-leczenie*. Creative work and scholarly research was followed by practical activities: we founded the Liberature Reading Room in Kraków and launched a publishing line in collaboration with a publishing house Ha!art. The talk was accompanied by a presentation of Fajfer's kinetic (electronic) poem “Primum Mobile”, the closing section of his new volume of poetry *dwadzieścia jeden liter/ten letters* that problematises, inter alia, the relation between printed and virtual texts.

Introduction: why liberature and not the artist's book

We must admit that the term “artists' books” makes us rather uneasy since most of the books we present here, and most of the books in our still humble but slowly growing collection of Liberature Reading Room in Kraków can be hardly called “artists' books”. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, B.S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal*, Mallarmé's *Un coup de des* and Georges Perec's *Life the Instruction Manual* are “normal”, traditional codices, with text bound between ordinarily-looking covers. The two books we have written together are only slightly extraordinary: *(O)patrzenie* has but a torn-off corner of the cover, which a lot of readers and librarians take as an accidental damage and meticulously repair it; and nothing betrays at first glance that *Oka-leczenie* consists of three codices attached to one another in such a way that they form a kind of concertina.



K. Bazarnik & Z. Fajfer (*O)patrzenie*, 2003 Z. Fajfer & K. Bazarnik *Oka-leczenie*, (prototype) 2000
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Z_Etuv_cl4&feature=related www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsDdj4oFBFc

But despite their unconventional appearance, in fact, we have never thought about our books as “artist's books”, as their origins were literary. They grew out of texts (out of telling stories and expressing emotions) – out of texts that were seeking space to accommodate themselves in it. In the beginning was the word. In the beginning was writing, which for us, unlike for Derrida, did not signify absence but presence: of visible, perceptible words imprinted on some material, palpable matter that could be formed into a meaningful shape. In other words, we were writing *books* rather than *texts*, as we consider the book in its material form to be an organic element of our work, and not a transparent container whose shape should not interfere with words transporting the reader to sphere of disembodied meaning. As Zenon Fajfer put it in one of his articles: “[in liberature the] physical object ceases to be a mere medium for the text – the book does not contain a literary work, *it is the literary work itself*” (transl. KB)¹. And I specified elsewhere that the shape and structure of the book, its format and size, layout and kind of typeface, kind and colour of paper, illustrations, drawings and other graphic elements can be valid means of artistic expression².

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- 1 Zenon Fajfer, “~~liryka, epika, dramat~~, liberatura”, *Od Joyce'a do liberatury*, ed. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Universitas, 2002) 233-239. Read the English text at: www.liberatura.pl/teksty-dostepne-na-stronie.html
 - 2 Katarzyna Bazarnik, “Zamiast wstępu”, *ibid.* v.

***Oka-leczenie* – the first liberatic book³**

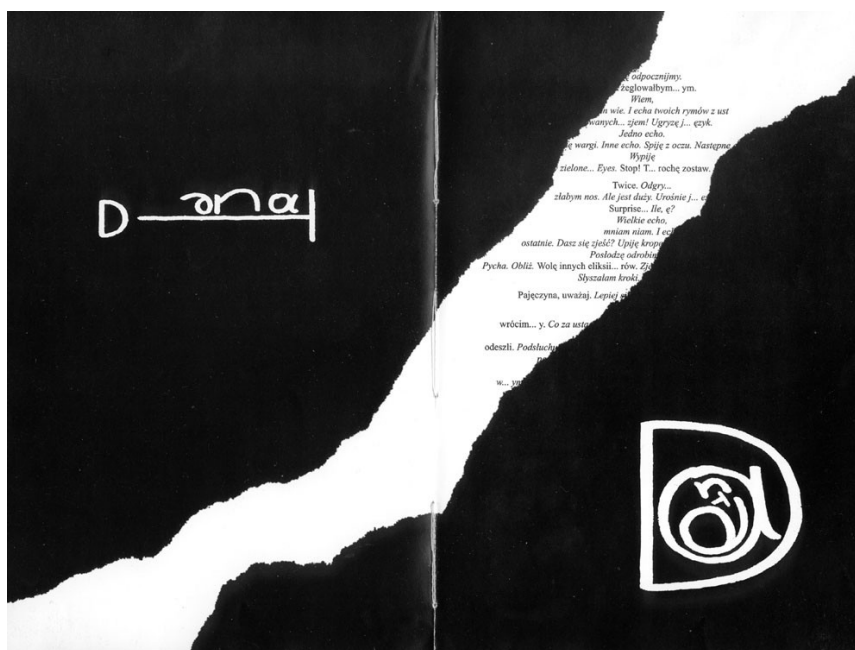
So the concept of “liberature” grew out of *Oka-leczenie*, the book we labelled as such, partly in order to avoid the term “the artists' book”. We had to come up with an appropriate term to describe it, or to give critics an appropriate tool to handle it if we wanted them to take it seriously. Otherwise, it would have been labelled “the artists' book” or a typographic happening, as someone called it, and relegated to the margins of literature. Instead of getting to libraries and bookshops, it would have ended up in galleries and exhibitions. But we wanted it to be read. Our priority in writing and designing it was not to make it visually appealing, but to find an appropriate form that would suit its subject: dying, gestation and birth, and the journey of consciousness through an intermediate region between death and another incarnation or nirvanic liberation.

Admittedly, *Oka-leczenie* has a visually attractive shape: it consists of three codices joined by the covers in such a way that the covers form a three-part concertina (see the picture above). The peripheral codices are set in hospitals: one in Poland at a man's deathbed where his large family have gathered; the other in an English maternity ward where a Polish woman is in labour, accompanied by her husband and two midwives. The middle part contains two kinds of handwritten texts forming 64 hexastiches. One type of handwriting consists of one words written continually so that it resembles an electrocardiogram, the other has readable words that turn out to form a short poem revealed in full only on the last page of this part (see the photo below).



3 The section on *Oka-leczenie* is a slightly modified version of section 3 of my article “Liberature: a New Literary Genre?”, in: *Insistent Images*, ed. E. Tabakowska, C. Ljungberg & O. Fischer. Iconicity in Language and Literature, vol. 5. (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007), 194-8.

Oka-leczenie makes use of other visual devices, too. For example, it features several different typefaces to differentiate among various voices (the outer parts contain only dialogic parts); a series of anagrammatic sign-poems that show a transformation of “DENAT” (Pol. a dead body) into “DANTE” (the name of a child to be born) (see the photo below), and a figural Polish-English palindrome.



Visual-textual devices in *Oka-leczenie*: DENAT-DANTE anagram and the text in the rift

But all such devices have been used before. The true innovation of this book is connected with a special technique of writing used in the two peripheral codices. Fajfer calls it “emanational”, because the text is derived from one “core” word in such a way that each of its letters “issues” or “emanates” a new word beginning with this letter. The resultant text emanates another text and the procedure is repeated several times. In reading this procedure is reversed and the reader should read the initials of each surface word to recover the first layer and then repeat it until she gets to the “core” word. This technique resembles Kabbalistic notaricon, but the emanational text is like a multi-layered notaricon or a kind of Chinese-box acrostic. This form was invented in order to convey how the old self (of the dying man) is shrinking into a single-word core from which a new self (of the baby) is developing, or how the posthumous consciousness journeys through an intermediate sphere between death and another incarnation. Finally, the text boils down to a single word that functions as the karmic element.

The outer codices are interlaid with the middle codex, reverse in relation to them, whose black pages are filled in white handwriting. It could be seen as an analogon

of nirvana: “*to, o którym brak już słów*” (“that of which one is lost for words”). The reader can “break free” from the samsaric cycle of the two outer parts and reach the central text if she discovers a textual thread left in one of the outer codices, hidden in the text printed in the visual fissure (see the photo above). In fact, this fissure remains in an iconic bond with the title of the book, and the method of reading it. It points out to the cleft that cuts the eponymous “*okaleczenie*” (Pol. maiming, inflicting a wound) into its reverse “*oka leczenie*” (Pol. healing of the eye). The black page is ripped through to reveal a text hidden beneath it, just as the title word is split in order to reveal a phrase with the opposite meaning. Similarly, the reader is invited to cut off the initials of the surface texts in order to notice the invisible texts encoded in them. Or, to remain within the Buddhist framework, the reader needs to tear through the veils of *maya* in order to realise an illusory nature of surface reality. Thus, the above mentioned image, the structure of the book and the method of reading it are iconic enactments of how Buddhist conceive of the world. (But it must be stressed that this is not “the canonical reading”; other ingenious interpretations have also been offered.)

Oka-leczenie was made in nine prototype copies (using print-on-demand service and hand-bound by a professional bookbinder) that are to serve as a model for a prospective publisher⁴. However, it has become known to the public through several reviews published in literary magazines as well as through our presentations in the Reading Room and elsewhere. Admittedly, some readers have been misled by what they perceive as visual extravagance and are tempted to perceive it as an “artist's book”. But its unconventional shape is inherently connected with the story delivered through the text and partly through non-verbal images. Although very visual, the work hides its greatest secret and its essential meaning in invisible, multilayered structures and cannot be adequately analysed if it were merely taken as an artist's book, or as a purely literary phenomenon. This is because for us the book is not, as Milton called it, “a transparent viol”, or, as Ingarden insisted, a negligible material foundation, but an integral part of the literary work, a visible and palpable text occupying a certain physically delimited space. Hence, in “**liberature**”, the name we use to refer to similar works, substitutes the Latin *litera*, i.e. the letter, with *liber*, the book. To put it briefly, liberature is literature in the form of the book.

4 But only when we persuaded Ha!art to launch “Liberatura” series, has it become possible to plan its mass edition.

Liberature: writers' freedom to explore the body of the book

Yet, *liber* also means “free”, which points out to the author's freedom to choose whatever material he or she wants to use: be it paper, foil, glass, metal or stone. We fully subscribe to B.S. Johnson's comment on his literary practice that whenever he departs from editorial conventions he does so, because they are inadequate for his purpose. This model liberatic writer explained that “for every device [he] used there is a literary rationale and a technical justification”⁵.

If I emphasise this bodily, material aspect so much, it is because Polish literary studies seem still dominated by scholars indebted to Roman Ingarden, a Polish philosopher who ventured into literary studies to produce a highly influential theory of the literary work of art⁶ in which he denied its “material foundation” (as he called it) any significance. It was to be passed over and not interfere with reading. This type of thinking reaches back as far as Plato, who saw writing as an inferior shadow of speech, an auxiliary tool to remind one of or evoke the spoken form assumed by ideas.

That the literary text is often treated as an disembodied entity (or as radically unstable and heavily subjected to historical, economic and technological factors) is proven by some editorial practices that, for example, allow for printing Blake's illuminated poetry as bare texts or for Polish editions of *Tristram Shandy* without the gap in pagination between chapters XXIII and XXV of Book IV and without the marble and black pages (instead, these editions contain a note *saying* that such pages appeared in the original). A similar tradition of textual criticism allowed Hans Walter Gabler to ignore the bibliographic code of the first edition of *Ulysses*, prepared under Joyce's supervision and evidently engineered by him to include allusions to page numbers and the material body of the book. Gabler's edition⁷, though textually probably more correct than all previous editions, does not give justice to “the book” as Joyce wrote it. Since for Joyce his works were “polyhedron[s] of scripture” (as *Finnegans Wake* names it on page 107, line 8) that he measured and designed carefully, sometimes integrating even the format and the colour of the covers with the text. There is no time

5 Bryan Stanley Johnson, “Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?”, *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?* (London: Hutchinson, 1973) 20.

6 Cf. Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931); *The Literary Work of Art*, transl. by George G. Grabowicz. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973); *The Ontology of the Work of Art*, transl. by Raymond Meyer with John T. Goldthwait (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989).

7 James Joyce, *Ulysses: A Critical and Synoptic Edition*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (New York, London: Garland, 1984, 3 volumes) and *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York, Random House and Vintage; London: Bodley Head; and Harmondsworth: Penguin: 1986).

to develop this fascinating subject here⁸, but I am mentioning this to point out that there are and there have been *writers* who have taken deep interest in the material shape of their texts.

So we must disagree with Clive Phillpott, who dismissed the term “writer's book” in favour of “artist's book”. Responding to objections that the term “artist's book” shifts the focus on the graphic and visual aspect of the discussed works he said:

The phrase "artists" books" has been criticized enough, but it is impossible to deny that among the possible alternatives it has the greatest currency. One objection to this designation has been that it defines books exclusively in relation to the profession of the visual artist. While this may annoy writers who experiment with the form of the book, alternatives like "writers" books"(?), or "musicians" books" can still be swept up into the all-embracing category of book art: *art dependent upon the book form*. In any case, it is clear that visual artists have contributed to most to the revitalization of the books as art over the last twenty -five years, and to the development of visual and verbi-visual languages articulated within the book form⁹.(emphasis mine).

That is precisely the bone of contention: we do believe that *writers* using the book in its materiality as another medium for expression, along with the text, should not and cannot be and, in fact, in the majority of cases are not, classified as “artists involved in the art of the book or making artists' books”. While we don't deny evident value and quality of “the artists' books”, we perceive them rather as belonging to fine arts, design and fine printing. Of course, as with all classifications boundaries are not strict and stable, but despite some overlap, which I am going to discuss in a moment, liberature appears to us as a *literary* rather than artistic phenomenon. Let me only add that these graphic features and similarities to “the artists' books”, or to use Higgins' term, their intermediality (or polimediality) has been responsible for earning many of them the epithet of eccentric, odd or transgressive among literary scholars and critics.

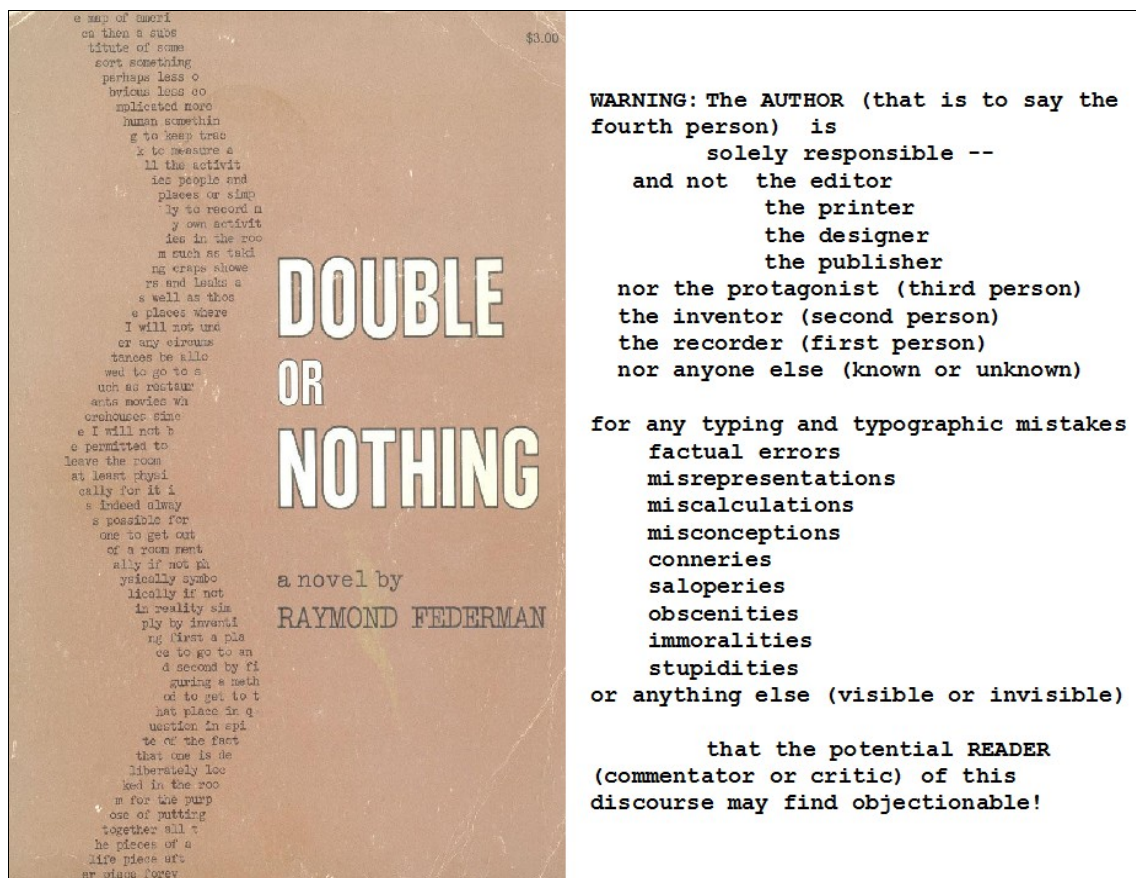
Liberature as a contribution to literary studies

I have mentioned Sterne and Joyce to point out to another source of our thinking and theoretical work on liberature, namely, to my scholarly work on Joyce and on the space of the literary work. My academic interest and research focused on writers such as

8 For more information on the subject see my article “Joyce, Liberature and Writing of the Book”, *Hypermedia Joyce Studies*, vol. 8 no 2, 2007, at: http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v8_2/main/essays.php?essay=bazarnik

9 Phillpot, Clive. “Artists’ Booklet”. From Printed Matter 1986/87 Catalog. Printed Matter, Inc. Essays. 25 Feb. 2005 <<http://www.printedmatter.org/about/booklets.cfm>>

B. S. Johnson, the above mentioned British novelist, journalist and screenwriter, Stéphane Mallarmé, Laurence Sterne, William Blake, Raymond Federman¹⁰, that is, on those writers who in Federman's words “are solely responsible and not the editor,



Raymond Federman, *Double or Nothing*, the cover of the first edition (1973) and a photocopy of the final page of the book in this edition.

the printer, the designer, the publisher, (...) nor anyone else (known or unknown)” for every aspect of their work. Of course, we know that this is an ideal rather than actual state of affairs, but what is important is the fact that a particular layout, or the material shape and structure of the book is seen as a part of the authorial intention and is subjected to the text.

Thus, these two paths: our creative work and scholarly research, had led us to formulate a postulate that such literary works should be classified as a separate and distinct *literary genre* whose generic distinctness would reside in this organic unity of the text and its material form intentionally shaped by the author. It seems that the

¹⁰ My doctoral dissertation called “Some aspects of spatiality of the literary work as exemplified by James Joyce’s *Giacomo Joyce*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (with a reference to L. Sterne, S. Mallarmé, B. S. Johnson and R. Federman)” was defended in March 2007 at the Philological Faculty of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland.

relation between the linguistic and the (biblio)graphic components can be identified as iconic. That is, the composition, arrangement and/or layout of the linguistic material and structure of the book resemble the structure of the presented world.

As already mentioned, Polish literary scholars have been slow to recognise the validity of this proposition. As it turned out, the Anglo-Saxon classification of genres seems to be less rigid than the strict and out-dated continental division into the lyric, the epic and the dramatic with their respective canonical genres. Anglo-Saxon theorists have been more prone to incorporate the “graphic surface” or the “material body” of the book into their theoretical reflection. Publications that tackle on this aspect of the literary work and see it as valid for literary criticism have been appearing mostly since approximately 1990, to my knowledge. One of the first scholars who have accounted for the materiality of the literary medium is Carl D. Malmgren. But even he needed to qualify this by pointing out that experimentation with the pictorial qualities of writing and the book is not a gimmick, “is as valid as experimenting with other aspects of literary language” and “constitutes an attempt to multiply the types of space available for signification”¹¹. Other books on the subject include: Michael Kaufman, *Textual Bodies: Modernism, Postmodernism and Print* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1994), D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), and written simultaneously with my doctoral dissertation, Glyn White's *Reading the Graphic Surface: The Presence of the Book in Prose Fiction* (Manchester UP, 2005).

Putting theory into practice

Zenon Fajfer's programmatic article “Liberature. An appendix to the dictionary of literary terms”¹², in which he put forward a suggestion for a formulation of such a literary genre, accompanied an exhibition of unconventional books we curated in the Jagiellonian Library as a part of Bloomsday 1999 celebrations¹³. Other works came from Polish artists, including Radosław Nowakowski and Andrzej Bednarczyk, two artists who had happily embraced liberature as a more appropriate label for what they had been doing. In Nowakowski's case that was a kind of turning point in the reception of his work. Although he had been a successful book artists, regularly attending artists'

11 Carl D. Malmgren, *Fictional Spaces in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1985) 46.

12 *Dekada Literacka* 5/6, 30 June 1999, Kraków, Poland: 8-9. Read the English translation „Liberature. Appendix to a Dictionary of Literary Terms” at: www.liberatura.pl/teksty-dostepne-na-stronie.html

13 By the way, we were happy to learn that Andi McGarry would be here with us, as a considerable part of the exhibits came from the Wexford Arts Centre collection of artists' books, where he worked at that time.

book fairs and presenting his work in art galleries and exhibitions, he expressed frustration at the fact that his books, containing a lot of readable text, were unread. Since then he started to be reviewed as a writer and his books are more frequently analysed by literary scholars.



Radosław Nowakowski *Ulica Sienkiewicza*

(Kielce: BWA, 2003) Watch the film on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hd4tLtq9Kl8



Andrzej Bednarczyk *Świątynia kamienia. The Temple of Stone* (Związek Literatów Polskich: Kraków, 1995)

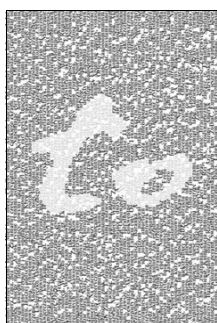
Watch the film on:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2SvM3DryfI>

All that inspired us to establish a permanent reading room where we could collect and make available such books. Rare copies of hand-made books would be placed along those mass-edited works that we have sensed or found out to be engineered by their authors, such as the above mentioned Laurence Sterne, B. S. Johnson or James Joyce. Beside those, the collection would include critical and theoretical publications tackling on the materiality of the book, and any other aspect related to liberature. Two years later we ventured into a collaboration with Małopolski Institute of Culture where we launched Liberature Reading Room in October 2002, now located in the centre of Kraków, in Karmelicka street no 27. The collection consist partly of our own books, donations by artists and scholars, and, only recently, books

bought with occasional grants. Last year the reading room team won a grant from the Polish Book Instituted and the Polish Ministry for Culture and National Heritage, which allowed us to relaunch an updated website (see the website at: www.liberatura.pl; the English version is under construction), purchase some books for the collection and produce a series of videos presenting the concept of liberature, and most interesting items from the collection (the introductory video with English subtitles is available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGWG4EYSLkg).

A year later, in 2003, in the wake of interest in our creative and academic work we managed to persuade a foundation for development of culture Korporacja Ha!art, which runs a publishing house Ha!art, to launch a series of liberatic books. The first book in “Liberatura” line was our *(O)patrzenie*, which accompanied an issue of *Ha!art* (no 2/2003; an interdisciplinary magazine on culture) devoted to our work. The series has slowly gained momentum, and so far it has published seven items, including Polish and foreign authors (see the series website at: www.ha.art.pl/index.php?var1>ShowRecsAll&&var2=254). It includes the following titles:



Vol 1. Katarzyna Bazarnik, Zenon Fajfer *(O)patrzenie*, 2003

(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/-o-patrzenie.html)

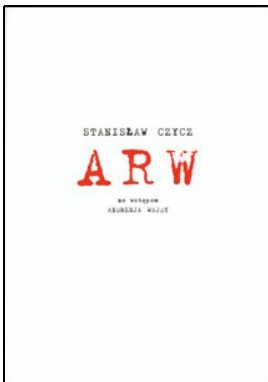


Vol. 2. Zenon Fajfer, *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę*, 2004
But Eyeing Like Ozone Whole, trans. K. Bartnicki, 2004
second corrected edition 2009

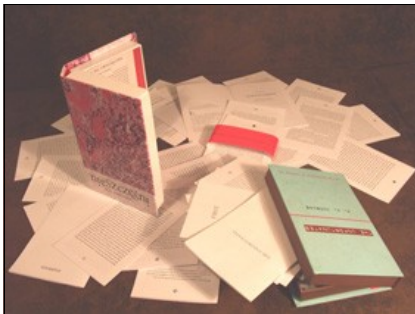
(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/spoglądajac-przez-ozonowa-dziure.html)



Vol. 3. Stéphane Mallarmé *Rzut kośćmi nigdy nie zniesie przypadku*, bilingual edition, transl. Tomasz Różycki, 2005
(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/rzut-kosci.html)



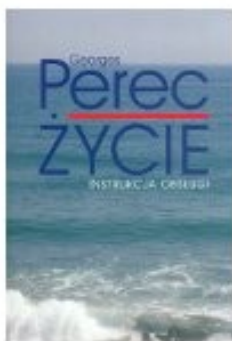
Vol. 4. Stanisław Czycz *ARW* 2007
(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/arw.html)



Vol. 5. Bryan Stanley Johnson *Nieszczęśni* [The Unfortunates], transl. Katarzyna Bazarnik, 2008
(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/nieszczesni.html)



Vol. 6. Raymond Queneau *Sto tysięcy miliardów wierszy* [Cent mille milliards de poèmes], transl. Jan Gondowicz, 2008
(Watch the film at: www.liberatura.pl/sto-tysiecy-miliardow-wierszy.html)



Vol. 7. Georges Perec *Życie instrukcja obsługi* [La vie mode d'emploi], second corrected edition 2009

and a leaflet to accompany the series: *Co to jest liberatura?* [What is liberature?] 2008.

In preparing each publication we pay special attention to the author's intentions, trying to establish or restore the original layout usually ruined by editors who, strange as it may seem, usually disregard the author's design. The series is finding its fans: an important literary critic, Leszek Bugajski described "Liberature" favourably as the most

extraordinary publishing line in Poland. During the Wrocław Good Books Fair Johnson's *Nieszczęśni* [*The Unfortunates*] was elected one of the six best books of the year published in Poland in 2008, and Ha!art was praised for a brave and consequent promotion of liberature, while in February 2009 a journal for Polish literature teachers *Polonistyka* counted liberature as one of the most interesting poetic trends in the last twenty years, putting forward Fajfer's *Spoglądając Przez Ozonową Dziurę* (*But Eyeing Like Ozone Whole*) as a suggested reading for the newest literary canon. It has also attracted some interest from abroad. In the autumn of 2008 a Danish literary magazine *Den Blå Port* (no 79)¹⁴ published "Liberature. (An Appendix to a Dictionary of Literary Terms)" with Fajfer's brief commentary. Our efforts to locate liberature on the map of literary works have been topped off when last year the team of editors of *The Companion to the Literary Genres* edited by a team of scholars led by prof. Gazda of the University of Łódź decided to include a record on liberature in the forthcoming edition of the dictionary¹⁵.

Thus, what started as a creative project of writing *Oka-leczenie*, has grown and developed into manifold activities: launching and curating a book collection and a reading room, encouraging and supporting scholarly work (it should be mentioned that the library contains several master theses and two doctoral dissertation on liberature, and some further project are under way), educating students (several university syllabuses in literature and culture departments include liberature, not to mention my course called "From Sterne to Liberature" taught in the English Department of the Jagiellonian University), giving talks on the subject to various audiences, editing a publishing line, and, last but not least, our own creative work.

We would like to close the presentation of liberature with demonstrating an excerpt from Zenon's latest piece: a liberatic volume of poetry *dwadzieścia jeden liter* (*ten letters*¹⁶) which problematises, inter alia, the relation between printed and virtual texts. It includes several printed poems whose material form cannot be translated into the digital format as they are, for example, printed on folded pages. But the final piece

14 For the summary of the issue in Danish see: <http://afsnitp.dk/plogultra/2008/10/14/liberatur-og-alternativ-tegns%C3%A6tning-den-bla-port-nr-79/>

15 See the collected bibliography of *Zagadnienia rodzajów literackich* (*The Problems of Literary Genres*), section: "MATERIALS TO THE 'DICTIONARY OF THE LITERARY GENRES': Agnieszka Przybyszewska, "Liberatura", and "E-liberatura", vol. L, 1-2, (99-100) pp. 255-258 and 247 respectively. <<http://www.kulturoznawstwo.uni.lodz.pl/images/stories/BIBLIOGRAFIA%201-50.pdf>>

16 The Polish title "dwadzieścia jeden liter" means "twenty-one letters," which is the number of characters in this phrase. The English title "ten letters" of the volume retains this isomorphism, or unity of form and content.

is a CD containing a kinetic poem “Primum Mobile” that, when played in a computer, reveals the dynamic nature of emanational texts which involve and evolve on the screen before the reader's eyes. (The first part of “Primum Mobile” is “Ars Poetica”, the poems whose printed, “static” version opens *dwadzieścia jeden liter*, and its kinetic version closes it; it is also available on-line at:

www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/fajfer/Ars_poetica_polish.html,
www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/fajfer/Ars_poetica_english.html)

Mapping the links

Since the project “Traditional and emerging formats of artists’ books: Where do we go from here?” aims at mapping relations among various forms of creative publications, I would like to suggest a classification based on the author's or artist's attitude to TEXT and point out where liberature can be located in this map. Thus,

SUB-TEXT

would embrace what is usually called “artists' books”. I would define these as artworks, sometimes assuming the shape of the codex and sometimes alluding to it in some way, that are inspired by the traditional shape and function of the book to creatively reflect on them. Text may or may not appear in such artefacts, but if it does, it usually functions as an auxiliary medium of expression since the focus of the artist is on the spatial and visual form. Or the artist may be inspired by the shape of a letter or a word to play on their graphic and semantic potential (I count concrete poetry here).

CON-TEXT

would embrace works in which both the graphic design and the text are equally important and one cannot be understood and appreciated without the other. They provide context for each other, and tension and interplay between them produces meaning. Of course, I am not taking about interpretation, but about an integrative activity in which authors design, write, draw, and often make their books themselves. William Blake is the most obvious case in point (one cannot really understand why his illuminated poems are reprinted as mere texts). Radosław Nowakowski seems to be another. In my opinion, Zenon Fajfer's *Ozone whole* belongs here, too. This is where liberature and artists' books overlap: here is the nexus where the two genres CON-nect and COM-municate.

PRE-TEXT

is the final category which would refer to works in which the literary (linguistic) text is of primary importance, but the author is aware of the presence of the book and makes the reader aware of this as well. A text pre-exists the graphic form or the architectural design and is the dominating element of the whole. So if a book assumes an unconventional shape or uses unconventional material, it is because the writer feels his or her text demands that form, that this is the most appropriate form in which his or her message can be expressed. These books are usually traditional codices, and belong to “ordinary” literature, but they are usually called “eccentric” or “gimmicky” because they keep reminding their readers that they are material objects (and this reminder is a willful design of their authors). They can be found among artists's books, too; then they are sometimes perceived as “dull” or “too textual” by people expecting more of an architectural or visual finery. And their authors feel disappointed that gallery audiences are not prepared to read them. We postulate that these books can finally be relocated from the margins of literature or visual arts into their own territory called *liberature* and that the tradition to which they belong should be finally recognised as an old and potent presence in the course of literary history.

Some articles on liberature available in English:

Bazarnik, Katarzyna. “Joyce, Liberature and Writing of the Book”. *Hypermedia Joyce Studies*, vol. 8 no 2, 2007.

< http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v8_2/main/essays.php?essay=bazarnik >

Bazarnik, Katarzyna. “Liberature: a New Literary Genre?”. *Insistent Images*, ed. E. Tabakowska, C. Ljungberg & O. Fischer. Iconicity in Language and Literature, vol. 5. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007. 191-208.

Bazarnik, Katarzyna. Summary. *Od Joyce'a do liberatury*. Krakow: Universitas, 2002. [on-line version available at: www.liberatura.pl/teksty-dostepne-na-stronie.html]

Bazarnik, Katarzyna, Zenon Fajfer. *Liberature*. Kraków: Artpartner, 2005. Brochure prepared for the 5th International Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature, Kraków-Amsterdam, 2005.

Fajfer, Zenon. “Liberature. Appendix to a Dictionary of Literary Terms”. Transl. K. Bazarnik. *Liberature*. Kraków: Artpartner, 2005. Brochure prepared for the 5th International Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature, Kraków-Amsterdam, 2005. 2-7. [on-line version of the article available at: www.liberatura.pl/teksty-dostepne-na-stronie.html]