

Polish IMPACT

A **guide** for foreigners
to Polish electronic,
experimental
and otherwise
unconventional
literature





POLISH IMPACT

**A GUIDE FOR FOREIGNERS TO POLISH ELECTRONIC, EXPERIMENTAL
AND OTHERWISE UNCONVENTIONAL LITERATURE**

2

Welcome to the land of King Ubu

Experimental, electronic, and otherwise unconventional Poland in a nutshell

9

Everything begins here

Polish specialties and inspirations

42

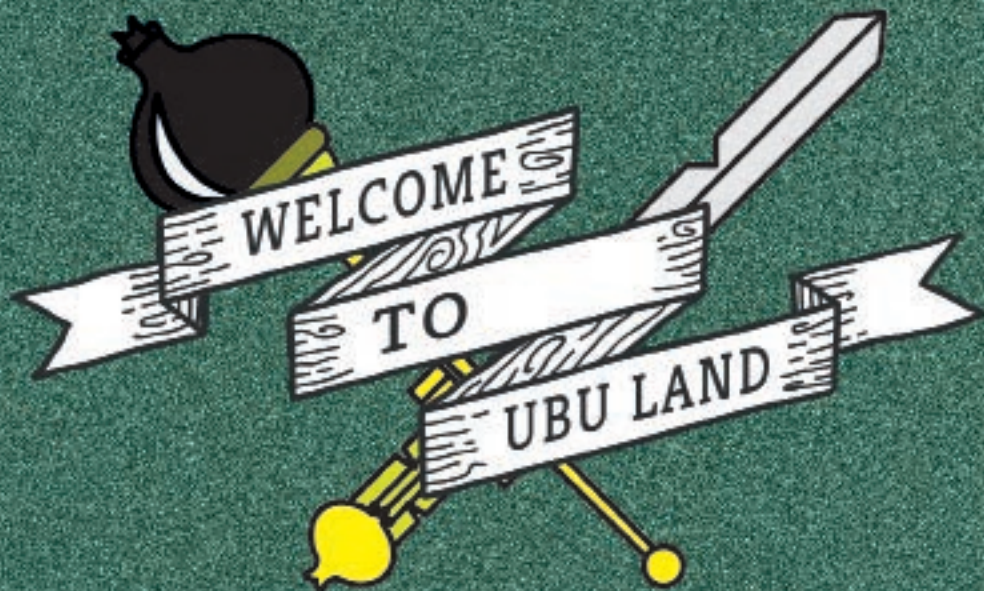
Who's who

Snapshots from the field of Polish digital literature in the past and today

58

Keleti blokk blocks

A social network game to learn about Central and Eastern Europe



¹ Your spellcheckers will be soon correcting literature into liberature, just you be patient!

POLAND WAS THE FIRST

We believe that everything began and shall continue to begin in Poland. In Eden, Adam and Eve spoke Polish, the *protong*, or the first language, from which all other languages originated (which was scientifically proven by Stanisław Szukalski, Leonardo DiCaprio's "Polish grandfather"), Christopher Columbus was Polish, and, of course, experimental literature also began in the land upon the Vistula River.

"HOW COME, " YOU ASK?

It is impossible to talk about experiments and pushing boundaries in literature¹ without *King Ubu or the Poles* (because that is the full title of Jarry's play). It is common knowledge that the teenage author set the action of his play "in Poland, that is, nowhere." As, indeed, at the time he created his work, Poland was temporarily non-existent.

We want to borrow Jarry's metaphor to tell you about the existing/non-existing empire in the field of literary experimentation, literary thought, and digital textuality. The Polish empire.

From this booklet you will learn that you have been misinformed about the history of world experimental literature. We want to tell you that it was really in Poland that digital literature was invented, that a Polish artist was the first to introduce spatiality and networkedness into literary art, that Poles rediscovered the medium of the book for artistic expression and

called this literature¹, invented bioart, wrote a mega-palindrome, and Poles were in the avant-garde of literary trolling.

Moreover, Poles are so advanced that they have participated in the creation of a coalition against the dominance of the English language, and our experimental artists simply refuse to be called experimental.

Probably most of you, our Readers, know the divide into the center and peripheries. You might think that only the center matters and that you happen to be in it. We want to make this perspective our own. We are writing this book as citizens of the great non-existing/existing empire of King Ubu. In it we offer a selection of projects that we consider to be the first, best and most influential, without looking back at anyone else's story.

*Therefore, gentlemen of Poland, forward!
Or rather, backward!*

A MAP OF ~~EX~~PERIMENTAL AND OTHERWISE UNCONVENTIONAL POLAND

Kraków:

- ↳ The Literature Reading Room
- ↳ Korporacja Ha!art
- ↳ Ha!wangarda festival
- ↳ Moca Museum of Contemporary Art

you can see Dróżdż's *Między* here

- ↳ Rozdzielczość Chleba often performs here

Łódź:

- ↳ The Film Form Workshop was here
- ↳ ms² — you can find some of Wojciech Bruszewski's works here
- ↳ Book Art Museum

Nowa Wieś:

- ↳ Museum of Palindromes

London:

- ↳ seat of Techsty

Rzeszów:

- ↳ Andrzej Głowacki's lab

Wrocław:

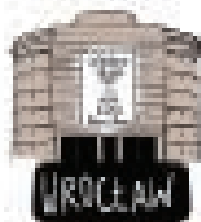
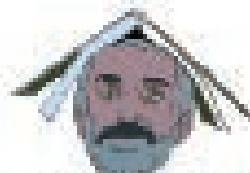
- ↳ You can see a lot of Dróżdż's works here

Dąbrowa Dolna k. Kiel:

- ↳ Radosław Nowakowski's publishing house
Liberatorium



WARSZATA
FORMY
WYKONYWAL
ŁÓDŹ



DĄBROWA
DOLNA



Korporacja Festiwal



IS IT REALLY *EXPERIMENTAL*?

From From Combinatorics to Liberateure On Misunderstandings Connected with So-called “Experimental Literature” by Zenon Fajfer

It is amazing how successful this scientific word has been in the field of art. “Experimental” is used to describe painting, music, theatre, film; also poetry and the novel can be “experimental.” “Experimental” is applied not only to attempts to solve this or that artistic problem in the process of creating a work of art (in this sense of the word, every writer, even the most traditional one, is experimenting, and traces of his experiments are left in his drawer), but also to finished works, which, since they have been completed, are no longer experiments. This subtle term of offence is

used whenever one wants to ignore or a work or avoid passing judgment on it (on the other hand avoiding judgement may be the most reasonable form of contact with art on the part of the critic), and often, as Raymond Federman rightly pointed out, it is used simply to protect the reader against its pernicious influence:

Everything that does not fall into the category of successful fiction (commercially, that is), or what Jean Paul Sartre once called “nutritious literature,” everything that is found “unreadable for our readers” (that’s the publishers and

editors speaking – but who the hell gave them the right to decide what is readable or valuable for their readers?) is immediately relegated to the domain of experimentation – a safe and useless place.

Personally, I do not believe that a fiction writer with the least amount of self-respect and integrity, and belief in what he is doing, ever says to himself: “I am now going to experiment with fiction; I am now writing an experimental piece of fiction.”

To put it in a nutshell, this insult is used to characterize anything that is different, complicated, and original in the arts, and implies, intentionally or unintentionally, that there is still a long way to go from experiment to “properly applied theory.”

[...]

Is this an exaggeration? But how else can I describe the innovation of Aeschylus, who betrayed tradition and introduced the second actor on the stage, while limiting the domination of the chorus? Sophocles' further innovation, i.e. introduction of yet another actor, could also be called “experimental.” And what about Shakespearian drama with its loose, episodic plot, rejecting traditional rules of composition and ignoring the three unities? All of them were great and risky “experiments,” to use today's idiom. What is more, Homer gets deserved praise from Horace for not starting his epic *ab ovo*. But does that not testify to his unhealthy tendency to “experiment”? And what about Dante? His

Divine Comedy is nothing else but, as we would call it today, an enormous “linguistic experiment.” That lover of antiquity (and other people's wives) literally created a new language for the sake of his poem!

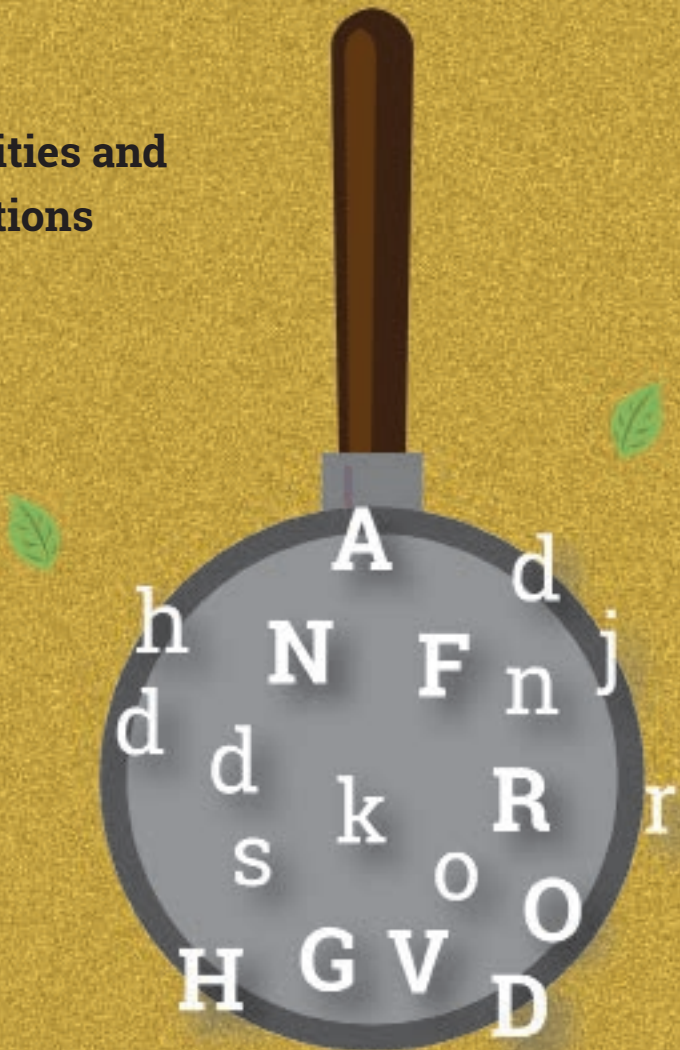
[...]

And nobody calls these eminent books “experimental writing”! The term is aimed at new works, still untamed (not to say, unarmed) by criticism, books so innovative that they evade easy evaluations and existing classifications.

[...]

It is high time, then, to invent another, more adequate term of abuse. Who knows, however, if the term isn't worth saving to describe the activities of those contract critics of literature and the other Muses, since if anything is experimental, it is exactly criticism, not creative writing. And there is nothing wrong with that, if only we finally realize it. It is definitely an experiment on the living organism, and subsequent generations of critics can experiment on the same organism in different ways. So it is the theory that is experimental, not the practice. If anybody notices a risky paradox here, she is not mistaken. This statement applies also to the present discourse, which I accept with all humility.

**Polish
specialities and
inspirations**





THE DEMO SCENE

#creativecomputing #demoscene #collaborative writing #party

Did you know that Poland belonged to the part of the world that saw the birth of one of the most interesting social phenomena in the field of digital media - the demoscene?

The demoscene is a subculture of computer geeks, who meet at **demoparties**, where they show off their computing skills on old platforms and engage in Dionysian partying.

The scene came to life in the 1980s and flourishes to this day. In its first days its members were called “illegal boys” (“illegal” because they often engaged in pirating), they were the first generation of teenagers growing up with personal computers (like the Amiga, Atari, Commodore, ZX Spectrum).

One of the main elements of the parties is a competition called “compo,” during which works from different scene genres are demonstrated: especially demos and intros.

A party is usually organized by the users of one partic-

ular platform. Participants of the ZX Spectrum scene are a different subculture than those programming for the Amiga. The machine you use is a very important identity marker.

Parties may gather up to a couple hundred people, who bring their own equipment (very often they are organized in school gym halls).

The demoscene is like an underground society, a social microcosm. The screenwriters of the cult movie Fight Club were inspired the experience of the demoscene, and the opening credits reference demo aesthetics. The demosceners also lead a kind of double life; they are regular workers in normal occupations and become creative all-powerful computer hackers at parties.

The demoscene has been the largest-scale known creative computing social phenomenon in history. Moreover, it is completely independent. The parties

are organized without any institutional support or grants. This is a truly grassroots movement devoted to testing the limits of computers and creating art.

The aim of demoscene geeks is to amaze the audience with their programming skills. "Old-school" demos are written on retro platforms – with these works the main challenge is to overcome the limitations of the machine and present a new **effect**.

The difference between demos and videos is that they are generated in real-time, which is often the only way, given the limited capacity of the first computers.

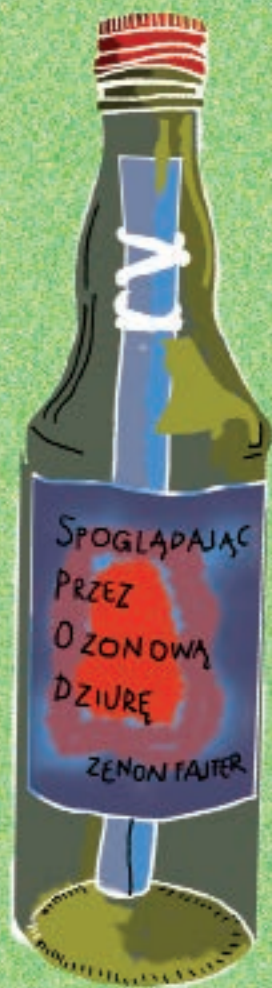
The demoscene is also a gold mine for scholars researching the beginnings of digital textuality. It gave birth to an array of genres, which can be seen and studied as e-literature. These include textual demos (with scrolls), games, disc magazines and digital adaptations of books.

In Polish demoscene literature, one of the most unique works is *The Road to Assland* by Yerzmyey and the Hooy-Program group. The title of this ZX Spectrum work is both an invitation and warning for those who want to research the aesthetics of this subculture. Serious respectable scientists should perhaps avoid this phenomenon, which can be at times quite politically incorrect (given most of its artists were teenage pro-

grammers) and has its own particular sense of humor. The demoscene also functions in North America, but it differs from its European counterpart in one key aspect. In Europe, it is difficult to imagine a party without alcoholic beverages...

"In the most general definition, a demo is a [...] computer program [...] that generates an audiovisual structure in the form of an animation with sound. Such a definition of the demo underlines the key traits of demos, distinguishing them from forms like games, music videos, or animations created with 3D modeling tools: the demo is a real-time program, the key effects of which are generated during its execution by a processor carrying out predefined computation and acting according to algorithms that combine and process relatively simple input."

— Piotr Czerski, "Maszyny, które mogą wszystko," *Ha!art*, 2014



What Is **L**iberature?

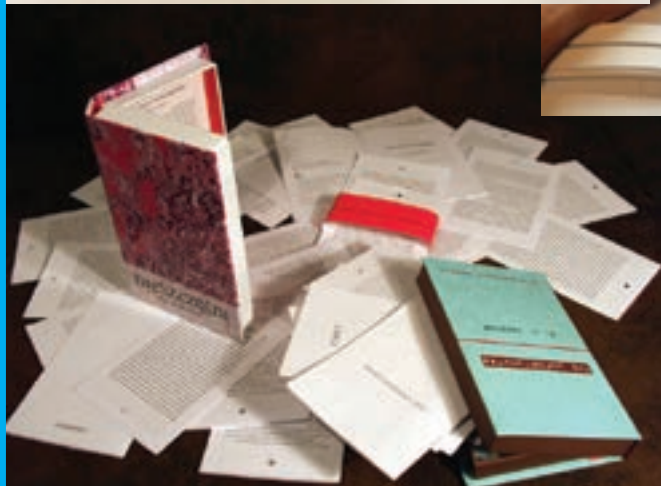
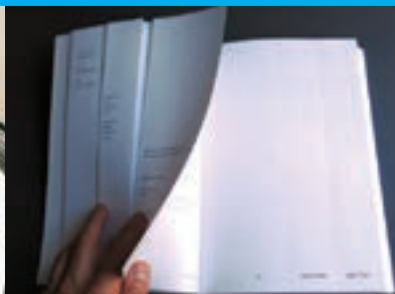
Liberature is liberty, artistic freedom, trespassing across borders between genres and arts. It is literature unconstrained by conventions, canons and critics. It is writing-weighing letters in order to build a book. It is writing that takes into account the book as a physical object.

Katarzyna Bazarnik *Od Joyce'a do liberatury*

There are literary works in which the artistic message is transmitted not only through the verbal medium, but also through the author “speaking” via book as a whole. In such works, a drawing or a blank space has the power of a poetic metaphor, and typography is elevated to the status of a stylistic device. Language is visual and material, and its materiality is meaningful. The space of the book is no longer transparent and insignificant. The architecture of the work becomes a meaningful place that the reader can traverse or explore in unexpected ways. Hence, the material book, which can be of any shape and structure, is not just a neutral container for a text, but an integral component of the literary work. It is a spatial-temporal object shaped by authors just as they shape the fictional world through words. So such works often go beyond language and speak through blank spaces, images and other graphic elements, different kinds and colours of paper or other materials used for printing and binding. But this is not creative design or book art. These are books written by authors—writers and poets, who use the resources of the book as their material, too. It is literature in the form of the book, or liberature.

The term, derived from the Latin word *liber*, was introduced in 1999 by Polish poet **Zenon Fajfer** in his seminal article “Liberature. Appendix to a dictionary of Literary Terms.” The first book referred to as liberature

was *Oka-leczenie (Mute-I-Late)* by Fajfer and **Katarzyna Bazarnik**. The concept sprang from the couple's collaboration on this jointly written work. After a decade, the book finally took on the shape of a triple-dos-a-dos.



The authors used this unconventional form to hint at a subtle connection between three separate stories told in the separate codices of their book—the story of a dying man, a baby to be born, and a love affair in between. The title can be loosely translated as “Mute-I-Late” or “Eye-S-Ore.” In the original, it is a pun on the Polish word *okaleczenie*, which means “hurting of the eye”; but when cut into halves, the word turns into its opposite: “healing on the eye.” So the title invites readers to cast off stereotypical habits of reading, to pay attention to every detail of the entire book and perceive the work in more a integral way.



Fajfer and Bazarnik's next book **(O)patrznie** (*Ga(u)ze*), published in 2003, launched the imprint under the name of Liberatura in Ha!art Publishing House. The aim of the series is to present liberatic writing as a distinct, though little acknowledged tradition that celebrates the book as the meaningful and liberated medium of writers (www.ha.art.pl/liberatura.html). So far it has published over twenty titles, including Mallarmé's *The Throw of the Dice*, Queneau's *One Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*, B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, the trade edition of *Oka-leczenie*, the first translation ever of Herta Müller's poetic collages *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm* and Polish translation of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Each of its volumes is different, each has its own unique shape, and each

goes beyond the stereotype of the ordinary book, which makes the imprint stand out among publishing lines in Poland.



Fajfer and Bazarnik's books, their theoretical proposal, as well as editorial and publishing activities set off a distinct movement in contemporary Polish literature, which has also attracted growing attention abroad. Fajfer's original idea, elaborated theoretically by Bazarnik and others, has gradually been recognised as a **literary genre** that combines verbal and non-verbal means of expression in the meaningful space of a book. So far presentations of liberature in the form of lectures, public talks and book exhibitions have been held all over Europe, in the UK, Ireland, France, Italy, and beyond: in Taiwan, Japan and the USA (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Oakland).



But one may justifiably ask what this book-bound genre has to do with electronic literature? A lot in fact. First of all, liberatic books often rely on a non-linear, hypertextual kind of narration. Take B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*. This novel-in-a-box consists of twenty-seven unbound sections of differing length that can be read in any order. It tells a story of a sports journalist who arrives in an unknown city to report on a football match and unexpectedly gets entangled in a web of painful memories that this place evokes in

him. Only the “First” and “Last” sections are marked, indicating where to enter and leave his story. The readers may follow some temporal clues to reconstruct his repressed, traumatic memories in chronological order. Alternatively, they may look for other “textual links” to reconstruct his present visit in the city, and treat the memories as flashbacks. Finally, they may read the book in any random order, as if in imitation of an associative flow of the hero’s thoughts. Raymond Queneau’s *One Hundred Thousand Billion Poems* also offers the readers an incredible number of possible ways of arranging their own sonnet. It is a highly interactive book, inviting physical manipulation of this textual machine. *Oka-leczenie* also requires similar cooperation. The readers are not only free to choose any of the three volumes as the starting point, but may also discover “invisible” texts hidden under the surface. While reading the initials of all the words they can recover hidden stories and discover how the whole book has emanated from just one word. Many other liberatic works require a comparable, “non-trivial effort to traverse the text,” to use Espen Aarseth’s term, equally useful to describe electronic literature and liberature.



But hypertextual structure is not the only similarity between these two types of creative writing. Liberatic works often investigate the tension between paper and virtual spaces, as does Fajfer in *dwadzieścia jeden liter/*

ten letters, in which paradoxically, the printed codex is much more interactive than electronic poems on the CD included in the book. In his latest work *Powieki* (Eyelids) Fajfer offers his readers an amazing textual labyrinth, build up from a series of emanational poems, intricately interconnected on many levels. Again the readers are invited to either explore it using their own perceptivity, pen and paper and the printed book, or turn to the DVD, in which they can use arrows and hyperlinks.



Other authors of liberature who have close links to the electronic medium are Radosław Nowakowski and Robert Szczerbowski, who are presented in other parts of this publication. Szczerbowski’s *Antologia: Kompozycje. Księga żywota. Æ*, published as volume 20 in “Liberatura” series, is a story of imaginative fiction that travels across ages and media. Reaching back to the tradition of oral storytelling, this narrative inhabits traditional, printed codices (in Parts I and II—Compositions, and The Book of Life), and then moves beyond them to electronic platforms. Part III of the *Anthology*, an untitled, programmatically anonymous text, called *Æ* for convenience’s sake, is the first Polish electronic piece of creative writing. It was initially issued in a set comprising a 3½-inch floppy disc and the printed dos-à-dos booklet in 1996. However, when it appeared in 2013 in the *Anthology*, the most up-to-date digital

technology turned out to be... print. Its electronic version is now accessible on various platforms by scanning the QR code printed on a postcard included in the *Anthology*.



Of course, this brief overview can only hint at the links between liberature and electronic literature. But it is worth pointing out in conclusion that appearing three years before N. Katherine Hayles' "techarticles" and ten years before Jessica Pressman's "bookishness", **liberature** is a uniquely Polish contribution to the discussion on complex relations between content and form, literary language and its material encodings, as well as preconceptions about practices of reading and writing. And in liberature it is the book that appears as a truly innovative medium, and a non-transparent interface that by no means has exhausted its potential.

liberature reading room



The first The Liberature Reading Room was founded in October 2002 as part of the Art Library in the Małopolska Culture Institute on the basis of Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer's collection and donations of other authors; now it is a part of the Multimedia Section of the Main Library of Malopolska Province. It collects contemporary works of liberatic character, and works anticipating it, which could be now classified as liberatic, as well as theoretical and critical publications, reviews, notes, press clippings, and all other related materials. It presently amounts to about 300 items and is still growing. The Reading Room hosts meetings and lectures on liberature, similar artistic and literary phenomena, and on particular authors.

See more in: The Liberature Reading Room in Arteteka, in Malopolska Garden of Arts, ul. Rajska 12, Kraków, Poland

www.liberatura.pl



Did you know that the celebrated Polish writer **WITOLD GOMBROWICZ** was a pioneer of modern trolling in the literary community?

Witold Gombrowicz is the author of the essay *Against Poets* (Polish: *Przeciw poetom*), which was published in the 1950s in the journal *Kultura*, a very important publication of the Polish emigration in Paris during the communist period. The essay was written in Argentina, where Gombrowicz lived for 25 years.

Gombrowicz presented his essay for the first time in 1947, when he met with his friends in the Argentinian bookstore and cafe Fray Moco. He read to them the Spanish translation of his manifesto *Against Poets*, written in the poetics of a trolling comment. In this gesture by Gombrowicz, who hates on poetry as a Form, as a Church, an Institution, we find the same formula we experience in the contemporary online strategy of trolling. Gombrowicz's trolling was very successful, provoking emotional replies from many well-known literary scholars and poets, including the Polish Nobel Prize winner in literature, Czesław Miłosz. Anecdote has it that many more important Polish literary figures had sent in serious responses, but the editor of *Kultura* persuaded them to withdraw their polemical articles, arguing they would make themselves look silly. Thus, the predigital trolling met its predigital "don't feed the troll" equivalent.

It is important to note that poetry played a crucial role in shaping the Polish national identity. In particular, romantic poetry was considered one of the key elements for preserving Polishness in the time in history when Poland was taken apart by neighboring empires. The poetic tradition is so strong in our country that Polish literature did not even create a strong tradition of realist novels, only great poetic works and novels written according to the "poetic prose model." Thus Gombrowicz the troll attacked something most sacred, especially as he did this only two years after the Second World War, in which many poets died fighting. From his safe refuge in Argentina, where the writer had passed the war, such trolling was extremely powerful. Gombrowicz was merciless in attacking something that was absolutely dominant, a taboo, a certainty and common good. Only from out of Poland could such a total attack be launched.

Remebering Gombrowicz's epic trolling in 2015

In Gombrowicz's formula and strategy, Piotr Marecki found a link between the times when the Polish writer did a reading of his text for the Argentinian audience and today's digital practices. During the E-Poetry Festival in Buenos Aires (2015) Gombrowicz's gesture was recreated, but directed at different forms of domination, with the use of a different lexicon – the one describing the struggles within the field of digital literature. Thus, the English language was attacked as the most oppressive factor in the field. It is mostly in English that the current canon of e-literature has been written and it is in this language that all international discussions and events in the field are held. To this practice Polish and Argentinian artists said a large, hateful **NO**

in Buenos Aires. And they did so presenting their manifesto in the own languages, Polish and Spanish. They advocated: "We know very well that all that happens happens in language, it is in it that are manifest all types of domination, [...]. Language reproduces absolutely everything and is the most effective tool of symbolic violence. There is no need to add that as representatives of languages that are subjected and dominated we feel this everyday. The center calls us margins, peripheries or ends of the world, and we either have no voice, or our voice is made to be unimportant, barely audible, weakened so that it cannot be heard or properly expressed, on the verge of exclusion and ignoring."

Efektom tego spotkania było założenie koalicji, której nazwa wyrażana może być w każdym języku poza angielskim, przeciwko któremu koalicja jest zwrócona. W Buenos Aires zaczęto od nazwy polskiej, która brzmi Koalicja Przeciwko Angielskiemu jako Językowi Dominującemu, w skrócie Koalicja przeciw AngDo. Jak ustalono nierówności językowe i imperializm językowy angielskiego będziemy piętnować w każdej formule. Tę praktykę hejtingu przeciwko dominacji angielskiego poparło wiele głosów ze świata "obrzeży i peryferii."

William A. Sullivan
Federal Bureau of Investigation
11000 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California

1000 Lemo Lane #4
Fullerton, California
92631

September 2

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

I am enclosing the
go with information and
This is the first contact
with him are three Marxists
Based on personal dealings
and Frank Kortensteiner
The text of the letter
location, scientific-fiction

ment is involved
people or even that Fitt
based but that all of t
in a chain of command
Total Party functionar
Personal letters to m
Party group, which is
since he
is, largely
power from
essays and
view from
his publish
controlled sc
indicated th
our profess

in substance which appear to be in the fields of sci-
ence, review, and politics through our organization
the future of the world of horrors and little
at this time, the campaign to establish
major novelist, and this is losing ground;
serious opposition to his creative abil-
ity have been overruled. It is a crude, insult-
ing, ignorant attack on a great science fiction and
fiction writer, and so far to fast as alienated eve
has faithful (it is one of the most highly educated).

It is a grim development for our field and its hopes to find
a completely alienated completely



LEM

Stanislaw Lem, the Polish science fiction writer, philosopher and futurologist, author of *Solaris*, foresaw in his writings electronic literature (which he called bioliterature) and bioliterature

Lem — the polymath

Lem, Poland's most translated writer, said of himself: "It is common knowledge that Lem ate the encyclopedia, and if you shake him a bit, he will spit out swarms of algorithms and formulas..." The critic Stanisław Bereś is even more direct "This writer, like an intellectual bulldozer, with amazing erudite ease cuts through all possible areas of intellectual inquiry." Lem paired profound philosophical and literary knowledge with education in science and mathematics. The writing of the author of *The Cyberiad* (1965) abounds with references to theories from the field of science and often uses its language.

The story *Dragons of Probability* is one of the works in which Lem used terminology from the hard sciences, including quantum mechanics. The beginning reads: "Everyone knows that dragons don't exist. But while this simplistic formulation may satisfy the layman, it does not suffice for the scientific mind...Cerebron, attacking the problem analytically, discovered three distinct kinds

of dragons: the mythical, the chimerical, and the purely hypothetical. They were all, one might say, non-existent, but each non-existed in an entirely different way...." *Dragons of Probability* is a favorite text of physicians and mathematicians, who often use it when teaching students.. The story is also referenced by Stephanie Strickland in her volume

Dragon Logic.

Love, mathematics and mimesis

The language of science can be applied to writing about anything – including love and eroticism (although about the latter mostly with irony and mockery, which is typical of Lem). The digital poet the Electronic Bard from *The First Sally* (A), or Trurl's *Electronic Bard* generates love poetry: "A love poem, lyrical, pastoral, and expressed in the language of pure mathematics. Tensor algebra mainly, with a little topology

and higher calculus, if need be. But with feeling, you understand, and in the cybernetic spirit." The idea of literature created by other means than human writers recurs in Lem's works, and the concept of literature created by machines through mimesis





explained in the introduction to the *History of Bitic Literature* provides interesting interpretative context to studies on the newest experiments in generative literature, especially works which appropriate the literary canon and draw from works in the public do-

main, including work like *Sea and Spar Between* by Stephanie Strickland and Nick Montfort or *Once Upon a Tide* by J.R. Carpenter.

Mimesis [...] was about completing the body of work by writers through translation aggregates fed with the texts of work and other sources: biographies and monographs. This process allowed the machines to spontaneously create works that should have been written, but their authors neglected to do so or did not have time to write them. The essence of mimesis – the creation of “missing links” in literature – was thus the meticulous analysis of works by a given author, which would lead to synthesis: of threads, motives, ideas and structures – signaled in their existing works, but unstated directly. — Dariusz Brzostek, Projekt literatury konceptualnej? O „książkach nieistniejących” Stanisława Lema, 2001]

Biopoetry

Stanisław Lem came up with the idea of biopoetry three decades before Eduardo Kac published his biopoetry manifesto in the *Cybertext Yearbook* 2002/03. *Lem's Imaginary Magnitude* (1973) – a collection of prefaces to fictional books – contains a preface to *Euritics* by Reginald Gulliver, which is based on the following idea: “Why not to mutate a bacteria so it is able to write?” The main protagonist of Gulliver's experiment is *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). At the beginning the “microbe” is trained to articulate its thoughts and

emotions spontaneously using Morse Code (*E. coli eloquentissima*), then Gulliver creates a literary exercise for *E.coli* forcing bacteria to write his own poetry (*E.coli poetica*). The poems are short and grammatical errors occur (“Agar agar is my love as were stated above”) but this does not change the fact that the bacterial poetry project is revolutionary. How do you find Lem's ideas today when Christian Bök succeeds with his poetic bug (*The Xenotext Experiment*, since 2008)? Truly anticipatory, isn't it?

*** Interesting fact: The Warsaw Copernicus Science Center has a poetry generating machine inspired by the Electric Bard

Philip K. Dick vs Stanisław Lem

Even though Stanisław Lem took a dim view on American science fiction (“poorly written,” “interested more in adventure than in ideas or new literary forms”) he considered Philip K. Dick as one of the best sci-fi writers, “a visionary among the charlatans.” Lem’s compliments, praise and endorsement did not withhold the accusations Dick formulated in 1974 in his letter to the FBI. Dick questioned Lem’s existence, claiming that “Lem” was a false name used by a group of communists operating as to infiltrate the field of sci-fi writing and to gain control over it through criticism.

From Philip K. Dick’s letter to the FBI, September 2nd, 1974

[...]

For an Iron Curtain Party group — Lem is probably a composite committee rather than an individual, since he writes in several styles and sometimes reads foreign, to him, languages and sometimes does not — to gain monopoly positions of power from which they can control opinion through criticism and pedagogic essays is a threat to our whole field of science fiction and its free exchange of views and ideas.



[...]

Their main successes would appear to be in the fields of academic articles, book reviews and possibly through our organization the control in the future of the awarding of honors and titles. I think, though, at this time, that their campaign to establish Lem himself as a major novelist and critic is losing ground; it has begun to encounter serious opposition: Lem’s creative abilities now appear to have been overrated and Lem’s crude, insulting and downright ignorant attacks on American science fiction and American science fiction writers went too far too fast and alienated everyone but the Party faithful (I am one of those highly alienated). It is a grim development for our field and its hopes to find much of our criticism and academic theses and publications completely controlled by a faceless group in Krakow, Poland. What can be done, though, I do not know.



Did you know that composing palindromes is a national pastime in Poland?

There's even a Museum of Palindromes in Nowa Wieś near Serock. Despite the peculiarities of the Polish language, which uses a lot of consonants and digraphs ("cz," "sz," "ch..."). Polish writers indulge in writing PALINDROMADERS – extremely long palindromes (the term was coined by Stanisław Barańczak, a celebrated Polish poet and translator).

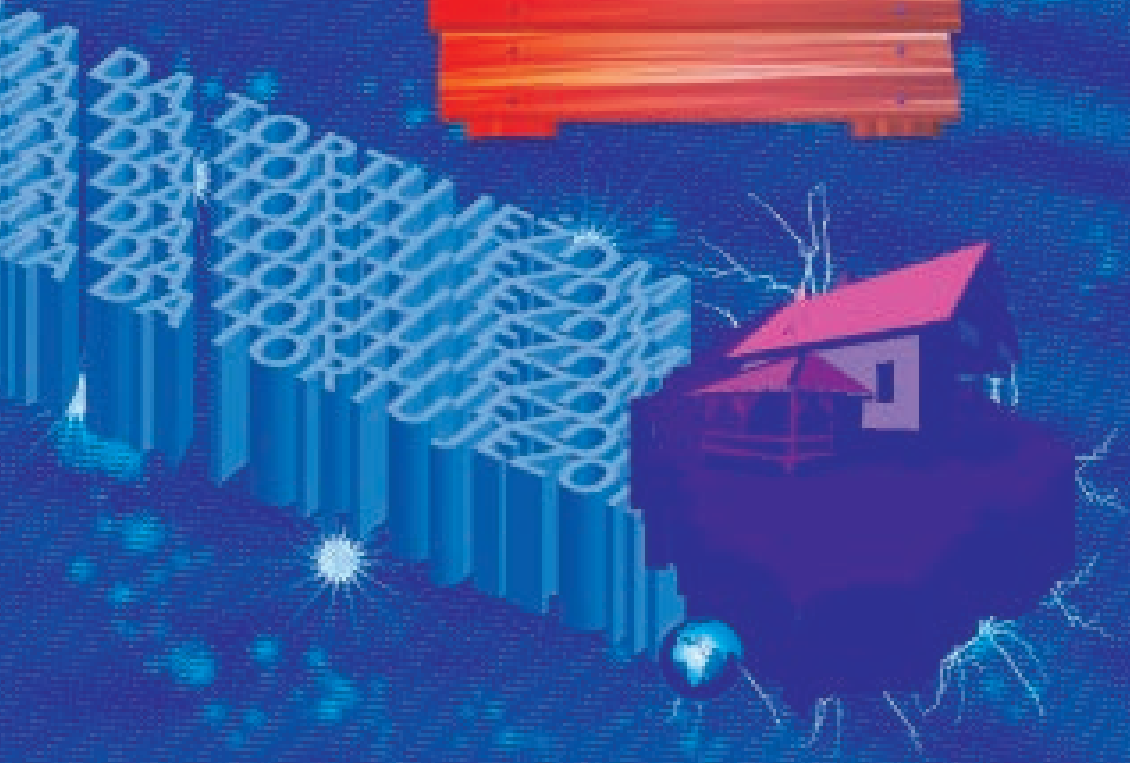
The longest mega-palindrome written in Polish (and perhaps in any language) is *ŻARTEM WMETRAŻ!* by Tadeusz Morawski – it counts 33 thousand characters; though, let's remember – as the website of the Museum of Palindromes advises us – it's not the length that counts, but the fun.

In 1996, Józef Godzic, another prolific palindrome-writer, obtained the Guinness Book of Records certificate for creating a total of 50 billion palindrome compositions. However, his name is not featured in the Guinness Book of Records itself, since, as he explains "it turned out to be a problem that the palindromes were in Polish. Moreover, I was told that there are too many of them to count."

Józef Godzic's feat was possible thanks to his own algorithm for writing palindromes. It is featured in his four-volume publication *Taaaaaaaaaaka księga*, which also lists palindrome phrases that can be used as building blocks for larger compositions. He calls it *The Moon Book*, since if all the palindromes that can be created with it were to be written out, it would produce a book of a width comparable to the distance between the Earth and the Moon.

POLAND

THE PALINDROME SUPERPOWER





MICHAEL JOYCE

A POLISH WRITER

Polish sweets may have made a cameo appearance in *afternoon*, a story, but his other works leave no doubts about it: Michael Joyce, the father of hypertext fiction, is a Polish writer! John Paul the II, pierogi, Wałęsa, Solidarność and vodka all abound in *Twilight*, a *Symphony* – considered Joyce’s finest hypertext. This work also happens to be a satire on the hegemony of English, where American supremacy over other languages is given a harsh lesson in irony. Through his Polish characters (Magda and Wojtek), and their complex relation to the main protagonist, Hugh, Joyce’s novel – like no other before it – breaks away from the stereotypical image of Chicago Polacks. Instead, the author of *Twilight* paints a picture of people originating from the Land of Ubu as highly cultured, brave fighters who can stand up to any tyranny.

How did this happen? The author of these classical works of hypertext fiction grew up in Buffalo among Polish (girl) friends who read Adam Mickiewicz (the Polish equivalent of Byron) and Czesław Miłosz (Noble Prize in Literature). The latter is famous for his distinct poetics of disconnected fragments: heaps of broken images that shine and make sense only after readers connect them. In order to find an equivalent poetic expression for the post-war experience, Miłosz

reached for Old Polish *silvae rerum*: “books on anything on everything” (you can read more about this form on page 38). Michael Joyce transfers this very poetic onto the computer screen. No wonder that it is the Miłosz’s piece “The Poet in Ruins” that forms the central point of Joyce’s memos for the next millennium in “Othermindedness.”

BETWEEN

Stanisław Dróżdź is a key figure in Polish concrete poetry. His best-known work is the textual cave *Między (Between)*. The installation, which currently can be seen at the MocaK Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków, consists of a white cube, the inside walls of which are covered in rows of letters. The set of letters is limited to “m,” “i,” “e,” “d,” “z,” and “y” — they are arranged in different combinations but never form the word itself. The viewer/reader can enter the cube and thus be truly “between.”

ALEA IACTA EST

Between is not the only one of Dróżdź's poetical works regarded as a proto-cave. Another of his works offering its viewers a reading (and game-like) experience in a 3D environment was *Alea iacta Est* (2003) – exhibited at the 50th Venice Biennale. Not only does this installation serve as an intriguing example of the analog ancestry of playable literature, but it is also a perfect example of the intersection of art and science in experimental writing.

Dróżdź's installation in the Polish pavilion consisted of a room “inlaid” from ceiling to floor with nearly 280,000 dice, arranged in a sequence of all 46,656 of possible outcomes of a traditional game in which six dice are thrown. The author prepared a game

for the Biennale visitors. According to instructions, participants were to throw the six dice lying on the table located in the middle of the pavilion, place the dice in a row and memorize or write down the obtained sequence of pips, and then try to find it among the 46,656 combinations on the walls. “If you find it, you win, if not, you lose.”

In the numerous reviews of *Alea iacta Est*, there are two main interpretative motifs. The first — playing on the words uttered by Caesar after crossing the Rubicon — refers to the cultural contexts of acting on a Caesarean prophesy that consists of throwing the dice, which “became the synonym of game as a form of life [...] and as such functions until today in the language of history, politics, art, philosophy, logics and mathematics.” Małgorzata Dawidek Gryglicka concludes, “Cast fate decided about one's position. The impossibility of influencing the final arrangement of the dice was what attracted most and what keeps attracting those who trust the dice. CHANCE.” The second, more common, interpretation refers to *A Roll of the Dice* by Stéphane Mallarmé, a poem about the number “which when found will allow us to recognize the mathematical formula of the universe, the secret of being, thus to introduce order into indefinite and escaping human cognition reality.” As Grzegorz Dziamski emphasizes, we keep on looking for this number but we can come across it only by chance (“Every thought is a roll of the dice and the roll of the dice will never abolish chance”). *Alea iacta Est* has been also made into a six-volume book published in 2006. Its pages are covered with the uninterrupted flow of pips.

#appropriation #erasure #loss

ERASING SCHULZ



It is a common practice in experimental literature to employ uncreative writing practices, such as appropriation, and to remix renowned works of traditional literature.

One of the canonical Polish authors who have had the greatest influence on world literature in general is Bruno Schulz. His small but extremely powerful body of work has inspired countless references and tributes.

The writer's works are accompanied by the story of his death, to which writers inspired by Schulz often allude. David Goldfarb explains:

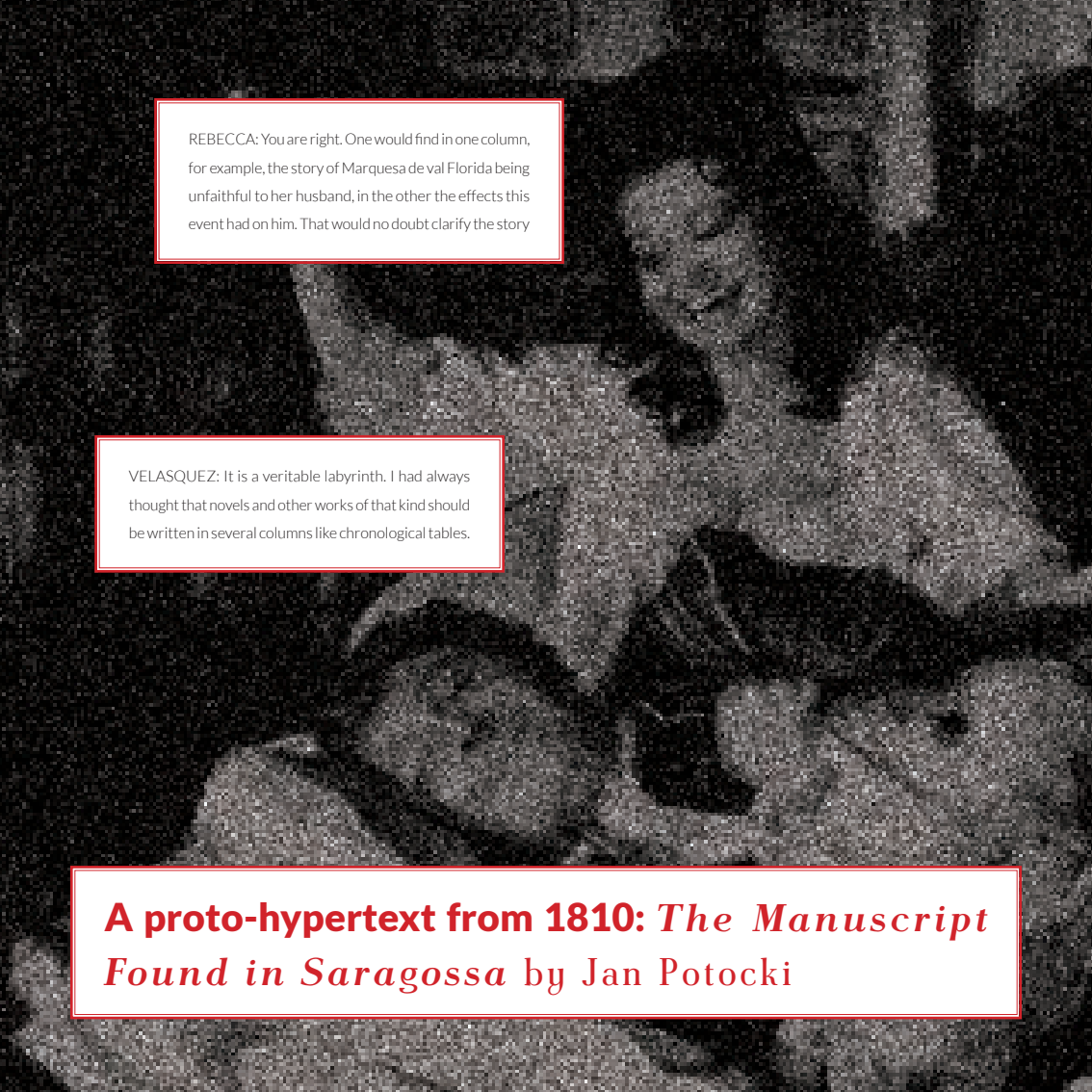
When Schulz's work began to appear in English, it was accompanied by the dramatic story of his death. As a Jew with valuable artistic talents, Schulz had enjoyed the protection of a Nazi officer named Felix Landau who employed him to paint murals for his children. During an anti-Jewish action known as 'Black Thursday' in Schulz's home town of Drohobycz on November 19, 1942, Landau allegedly shot a Jewish dentist who was protected by another Nazi officer named Karl Günther. The story, told by Izydor Friedman to Ficowski, is that Günther shot Schulz in revenge, with the line 'you shot my Jew; I shot your Jew. These words, uttered over the body of one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, are so ghoulishly mesmerising that they threaten to overshadow Schulz's own luminous words. (David Goldfarb, Appropriations of Bruno Schulz, 2011)

It is thus unsurprising that many writers appropriating Schulz base the concept of their pieces around the motif of loss, erasure and absence. Jonathan Safran Foer physically cut out the majority of text from Schulz's collection of stories translated

to English by Celina Wieniewska as *The Street of Crocodiles* (Polish title: *Sklepy cynamonowe*). Using this cut-up technique he created the *Tree of Codes*. Foer, who calls Schulz's work "the richest text that he knows." The American writer also underlines that during the erasure process he had "the feeling that [he] was...transcribing a dream that *The Street of Crocodiles* might have had."

Schulz's texts have also been rewritten, remixed and appropriated by Polish artists. One controversial example of such practices is the textual generator by Leszek Onak *Cierniste diody* [*Thorny diodes*], in which the story *August* is remixed with the manual for the iconic Polish car Fiat 125p.

In 2013 Korporacja Ha!art published a digital adaptation of Schulz's stories, under the titled *Ba!wochwał*, to celebrate the entrance of the artist's work into the public domain. The authors of the adaptation, which was stylized to look like a retro textual game, are Mariusz Pisarski and Marcin Bylak.



REBECCA: You are right. One would find in one column, for example, the story of Marquesa de val Florida being unfaithful to her husband, in the other the effects this event had on him. That would no doubt clarify the story

VELASQUEZ: It is a veritable labyrinth. I had always thought that novels and other works of that kind should be written in several columns like chronological tables.

A proto-hypertext from 1810: *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* by Jan Potocki

Count Jan Potocki's *Le Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (1794-1810) is considered to be the first Polish proto-hypertext. Spanning 66 chapters and populated by a large and colorful cast of Gypsies, demons, inquisitors and cabbalists, Potocki's frame-tale fiction challenges the linearity of print – a medium unfit to present complexity of spoken tales.

The Manuscript Found in Saragossa's structure of stories-within-stories reaches several levels of depth. Its characters and motifs – a few of the most prominent being honor, disguise, metamorphosis and conspiracy – recur and change shape throughout. As a collection of numerous intersecting tales, the work calls for better presentation and cross-referencing not possible until the emergence of digital technology. Potocki himself, through Velasquez – one of his main characters – suggests additional tools in form of “chronological tables” that would sort the complex narrative content by protagonists and dates. Many intermezzos and meta-fictional references further implode the linearity of print and the very temporal nature of storytelling.

In 1965, the novel was adapted into the film *The Saragossa Manuscript* by director Wojciech Has, with Zbigniew Cybulski as Alfonse van Worden.

In 2012, Korporacja Ha!art published a hypertext version of Potocki's novel, created by Mariusz Pisarski and illustrated by Jakub Niedziela. The adaptation was presented on the exhibition of digital literature in Bibliothèque Nationale de France during ELO 2013 Conference. It has all the navigational tools Potocki could have imagined: tables of narrators and characters, 800 links, and a new device called “post-links.”

For Polish people predigital writing is so **FIVE CENTURIES AGO**



It was not uncommon for the "authors" of these volumes to include members of the whole family, sometimes even the entire generation. Hence, quite often one could see in them many different "characters" of handwriting, ranging from some that could easily delight calligraphers to scribbles made by trembling old men or by hands just taken off a sabre or a plough (K. Bartoszewski)

SILVAE RERUM

Polish literature, from the Baroque up until the 19th century, exhibited the wide popularity of an ergodic, dynamic form of writing with textonic user functions. Called *silvae*, from *silva rerum* [Latin for ‘forest of things’] these works were distributed among noble class, whose members were at the same time readers, characters, writers, commentators and editors of a single work. Often collaborative and multi-generational, the handwritten *silva* was an all-in-one genre: a diary, a scrapbook, a collection of poems and other artifacts. Dating back to Ancient Roman times, *silva* was reborn in some parts of Europe, especially in Poland, during the Baroque period, and is considered one of the best examples of predigital openness and heterogeneity of form.

The first documented example of Polish *silva* was an anonymous manuscript written between 1560 and 1570. It contained odes, trifles, and erotic poems of the two most prominent authors of the era: Jan Kochanowski and Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, as well as three unidentified Latin poems and a Latin-Polish school draft. Later *silvae* could contain much more varied artifacts, including recipes for a long-lasting writing ink and hints for killing rats; some also featured locks of hair of family members.



An exemplary *silva* was hard to read in a linear fashion. Some manuscripts had almost two thousand pages. Skipping through material must have been

a common practice. If a reader wanted to browse the family history in regards to financial aspects, he or she skipped through occasional poems and focused just on economic information. If we consider that comments written by fathers could be followed by those written by sons and this process could go on through generations, a single *silva* appears to be a huge axial hypertext (the axis being formed by the temporal framework of the family chronicle and the physical boundaries of a manuscript), more compound and complicated than contemporary Internet blogs. By definition, the *silva* is a work in *statu nascendi*, written and read by a specific group of people it changes as their lives change, and it

ends when there is no one to write the story further. During the time of writing it has many features of

PERMUTATONAL POEMS

Did you know that the revolting nature of Poles gave way to some morally ambiguous permutational poems as early as in Baroque period? In the anonymous *Cuirass Hardened for an Ancient Knight* (1663) – a visual poem on the code of conduct for knights – the readers could read the text towards two conflicting verses and stanzas, one in line with the Church and one in line with more Dionysian values. Two swords were printed on the page that were suppose to cut out two different world views:

reading one

*You shall have no other gods,
hey live against all the odds
You shall not make wrongful use
of the name of your Lord,
you will be excused*

reading two

*You shall have other Gods,
hey live against all the odds
You shall make wrongful use
of the name of your Lord, you will be excused*

a multiple text, it is open to additions, comments and corrections.

Another interesting fact: it could take you three thousand years to read a single permutational poem, *Carmen Infinitum* by the Jesuit poet Ksawery Prolewicz (1732).

The poem is composed from seven concentrically arranged circles, each enclosing a part of the text. The starting point is always in the center of the circle and the sentence placed there: *The sadness bearer*. Thanks to its combinatorial formula the poem resembles an incessant litany. In his commentary the author claimed that to be able to read all the possible variants one should live at least three thousand years.



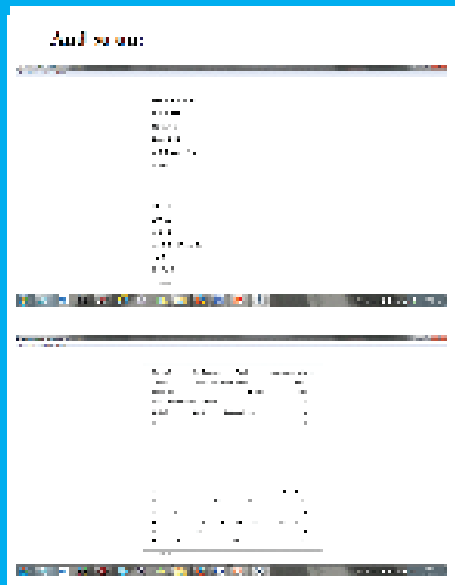
Other visual and permutational works from the Baroque include poems in the form of a garden, a snake, a star, a labyrinth, a cross, and even an obelisk mounted with a star (Kanty Herka, *Porta Triumphalis* (1725).



Carmen Quadratum by Władysław Simandl (1719) is a serious permutational machine. Based on the principle of *Carmen XXV* from the 4th century by Optatianus Porfirius, *Carmen Quadratum* allowed all the words from the first five columns to be arranged at random. Only the third word in every verse is stable – it guarantees the effect, namely that every permutation (1,62 billion possibilities) will produce a hexameter.

that a one-letter work can emanate
an entire long story?

Did you know that a whole poem can evolve from a single letter? I didn't know that this was possible, but Polish poet, Zenon Fajfer did. How did he do It? Look:



This is Fajfer's "Ars Poetica." These screenshots show how a whole textual universe can be born out a single word, and how the text can return to the embryonic IT. "Ars Poetica" has become so emblematic of Polish electronic literature that it even made it into school textbooks. If you read it in a printed version, you must discover the invisible texts yourself. But if you are too lazy to do this, you can read its kinetic, animated version at http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/fajfer/Ars_poetica_polish.html (the Polish original) and at http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/fajfer/Ars_poetica_english.html (its English translation).

Fajfer uses the emanational form in other poems and books, too: his liberatic *Oka-leczenie* and *(O)patrzenie*, written with Katarzyna Bazarnik, his famous bottle-book-poem *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę* (*Detect Ozone Whole Nearby*), printed on a transparent plastic sheet placed in an empty vodka bottle, as well as the labyrinthine hypertext *Powieki* (check it out on *Techsty*, issue 9/2014 (<http://techsty.art.pl/m9/>)).

DARING TRANSLATION PROJECTS

Polish translators know no fear. King Ubu's land is one of the few countries on Earth to boast a complete translation of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. In 2012 Korporacja Ha!art published Krzysztof Bartnicki's translation – his feat took 10 years to accomplish. Krzysztof Bartnicki has also created projects inspired by Joyce, including a “Da Capo al Finne” (2013), in which he takes of Joyce's masterpiece only the letters, which are used in music notation (ABCDEFGH). In the thus created score he found motives from Haydn, Chopin, and also The Imperial March from Star Wars.

In the field of e-lit, translation from Polish into foreign languages, and the other way round flourishes. One of the pioneer projects was the translation of *afternoon, a story* by Michael Joyce, which was a challenge not only for literary, but also for technical reasons. The test port of a Polish version for Storyspace, which was ready in 2008, turned our hardly readable! Lack of support for Polish diacritics resulted in a serious inability of preserving the conditional links. In the end, despite warm support from Eastgate Systems, *afternoon* in Storyspace PL

went to the bin of failed translational projects.

As a result of these perturbations Poland's gift to the world was the first browser version of the Storyspace classic! *Afternoon* for Firefox and Safari was published by Ha!art in 2011 (R. Nowakowski, M. Pisarski, J. Jagiełło).

Another area enthusiastically explored by Polish translators is language transfer of generators. Monika Górską-Olesińska, Aleksandra Małecka, Piotr Marecki and Mariusz Pisarski have translated a choice of generators by Nick Montfort into Polish. The latter three are also contributors to the Renderings project headed by Nick Montfort, which is devoted to translating and porting highly computational and otherwise unusual literary works. Piotr Marecki and Aleksandra Małecka are working on a variety of projects involving experimental translation techniques, like redoing, multimedia translation or automatic translation. At the 2015 Electronic Literature Conference they decided to present their book with the automatic translation of Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu* into Polish.

STANISŁAW CZYCH



Stanisław Czycz's struggles with the typewriter

In the 1950s Stanisław Czycz created a series of non-linear poliphonic poems, in which he placed columns of parallel voices one beside the other. He refused to be limited by the standard piece of paper, and sought to expand his writing surface, experimenting with a regular-sized typewriter and an A3 sheet of paper or gluing pages to obtain scrolls.

Czycz's heroic struggles to obtain the works he imagined (with unconventional typesetting and coloured text) using limited technical equipment became the stuff of local Kraków legends. His works were like scores for multimedia artwork, yet impossible in his times, and included not only texts, but also musical notation and images.

His most famous work is *Arw*, which started as a screenplay about the life of the painter Andrzej Wróblewski commissioned by Andrzej Wajda, but turned into a long experimental poem.

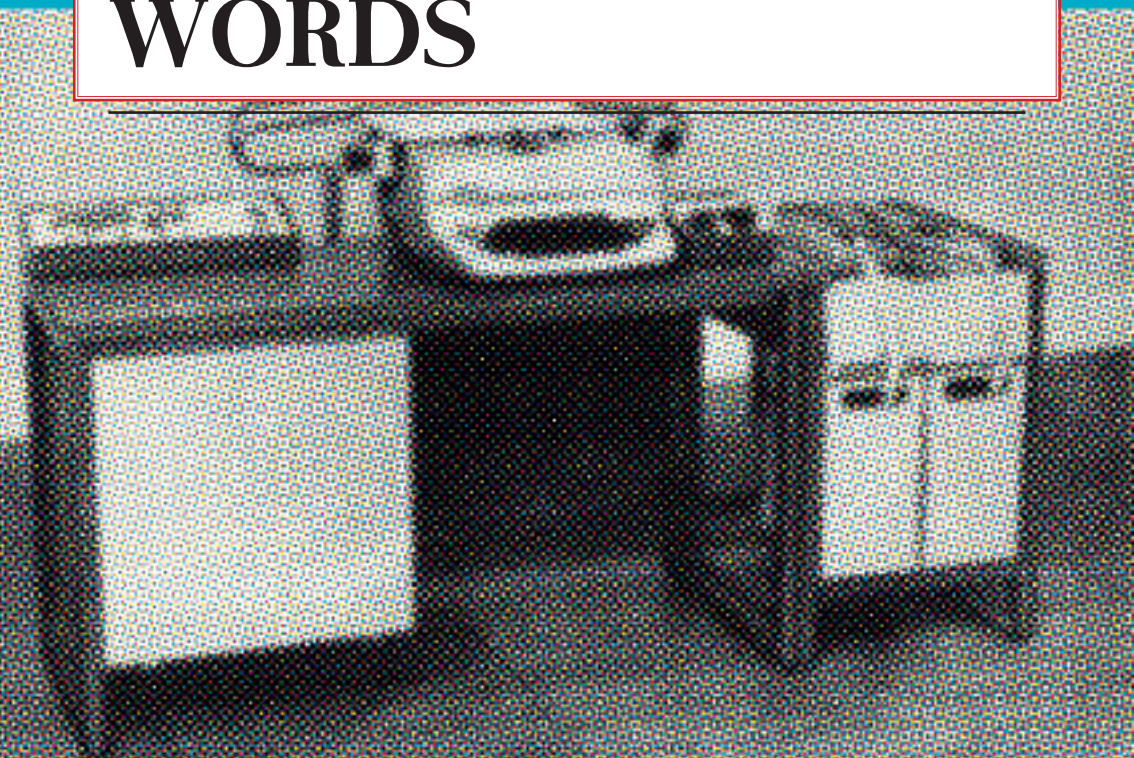
Czycz's writing was a print anticipation of digital literature, representing many of its traits, like non-linearity and multimediality.



[...] The dramatic struggle to note down the poetic work about Andrzej Wróblewski became the personal drama of the artist, who had to fight with the typewriter to preserve the image of the famous painter for posterity. It was terrible...

— Sylwester Marynowicz

ŻUK PIWKOWSKI'S BOOK OF ALL WORDS



Żuk Piwkowski's Book of All Words

Long, long ago, in the 1970s, behind the Iron Curtain, Żuk Piwkowski wrote his pioneering e-literary works for the miniframe computer.

His goal was to create a total Borgesian work, which would contain all possible words (using letters from the Latin alphabet), a 1:1 linguistic map.

He called his work *The Book of All Words*.

It truly does contain all words, existing and non-existing ones.

The reader may type any word of any length and the program will print the page with the word, together

with the page number and chapter number.

Żuk Piwkowski wrote the algorithm for his Book in 1975.

The work, originally written for a miniframe computer, was later rewritten in html and published online.

The failed performance

In the 1980s, Żuk Piwkowski wanted to organize a performance that would involve writing the *Book of All Words* over a long distance. A user in one city (Boston, Paris or Warsaw) would type in a word, and it would be printed in one of the other cities. Everything was prepared at Centre Pompidou in Paris and at MIT in Cambridge, MA, but...



"In Poland telephone communication was connected by operators. I had the codes and passwords for the computer at MIT, I had the access code to a computer in a military center in Warsaw, which wanted to work with me. Maybe they wanted to get into that MIT computer. [laugh] It all had to go through a telephone connection, and unfortunately it was impossible to get through these operators. [...] We tried for hours, but we never connected."

↪ **Żuk Piwkowski**

WOJCIECH BRUSZEWSKI'S

MACHINES FOR NEW WORDS AND OTHER PURPOSES

Photographs of sound, a four-arm gramophone, sonic camera, a radio station that broadcasts a never-ending, computer generated philosophical dialogue – are just a few of the tools invented by Wojciech Bruszewski in order to explore the cognitive potential of a machine and its “hypothetical consciousness.”

A graduate of film direction at the Polish National Film, Television and Theater School in Łódź, and a member of the avant-garde, Łódź-based group Warsztat Formy Filmowej (WFF), Bruszewski began with experiments with form in film, but then moved on to studying the role of a wide range of mediatory factors in our perception of reality: from language through photographic camera to computers.

Of direct interest to e-literature are Bruszewski's hybrid forms of cybertextual and combinatorial

nature. Fascinated by Jorge Louis Borges's combinatorial methods, Bruszewski created the first versions of his interactive, literary device titled *Nowe słowa* [*New Words*] or *Maszyna do nowych słów* [*New Word Machine*] in 1972. In the first version, the “machine” was made of five cubes strung on a piece of rope stretched between two posts. The sides of the cubes featured single letters, the rows of which formed “words” nonexistent in the Polish language. By turning the cubes, the viewer-operator could change the combination of letters, and thus

New Words



create “new words.”

In *Text* (1974), Bruszewski explored typographic, calligraphic and vocal elements in a photographic canvas with printed text, hung on a wall in a way that was both – fragmentary (as a static piece of material the flag revealed only parts of text), and interactive

(when viewers unveiled the canvas, hidden parts were revealed).

In *Maszyna poetycka* [*Poetry Machine*] (1982-1984), the idea and technical design of the original concept of a combinatorial device was further developed. This time it was based on electronic integrated circuits: the generator was made of a light board with

a row of twelve letter displays made from electronically controlled fluorescent lamps. The function of the random mechanism was fulfilled by a white noise generator and electronic circuits translating its impulses into the displaying of particular letters.

The pinnacle of Bruszewski’s combinatorial work was *Sonet* [*Sonnets*] (1992-96), a series of generative poetry installations.

An Amiga computer programmed by Bruszewski selected strings of vowels and consonants at random. The generated units – after forming words of one to eight letters in length – arranged themselves into one of the two classic sonnet forms. To include rhymes, the three letters of each line were copied and inserted at the end of the appropriate line, depending on the chosen structure of the sonnet. The

title was obtained by copying the first three words of the first line and adding dots. The beginning of the first sonnet generated during the premiere installation in 1992 read as follows:

*Yk dog fudc ana iffulci faz re ztyw,
Pa dygl pa af tnap pnyqacr iz ygofabe.
Ga yzmopy apoles gaqrynz pobomaj vfuabe,
Tedu amquci obe e dyjneb e ud urmutyw.*

Sonety was a multimodal project, in which the text generated on screen was simultaneously printed in a book format and read by a speech synthesizer or by an invited actor. The work proved to be one of the most spectacular and memorable of Bruszewski's performances, even more so since it changed its name depending on the location at which it was exhibited. Thus, there were *Leipzig Sonnets* (Leipzig, Medienbiennale, 1992), *Wrocław Sonnets* (Wrocław, WRO festival, 1993), *Budapest Sonnets* (Budapest, The Butterfly Effect, 1996) and *Warsaw Sonnets* (Warszawa, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej, 1993).



POETRY MACHINE (FLUORESCENT LAMP VERSION) – how it worked:

The letter set was limited to the vowels A, E, O, U and consonants R, P, S, L, C, F, H. Each of them was assigned a fixed place in the row and their succession was designed in such a way that the randomly generated sentences would be pronounceable. The assignment of spaces between the words was also partly random, but the row of letters would always be divided into two or three words.

AMIGA AS A POETRY PLATFORM

During his many years of artistic work, Bruszewski used the Amiga computer in his projects. When this platform lost the market battle to other computers, Bruszewski gave up on programming.

Bruszewski's Amiga 2000 was able to generate two sonnets per minute. The first collection of Sonnets containing three hundred fifty-nine poems took a night to generate. On the next day it was printed and bound. The same procedure was used for the next seven volumes of poems, but, thanks to the use of a faster machine (Amiga 4000), the time needed for generating the complete volume was reduced to two hours.

KING OF *LIBERLANDIA*

In the Kingdom of Ubu, Radosław Nowakowski stands as a kingdom on his own: a prolific creator of art books, a drummer playing “music of flying fish” (as Osjan, the band he plays with, describes it), author of bookish installations and several works of hypertext fiction including a polyvocal *opus magnum* *Koniec świata według Emeryka* (The End of the World according to Emeryk; Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków, 2005). In this vast and dense labyrinth of text, voice is given to a plethora of human and non-human, animate and inanimate narrators who recount their own points of views on the events of one single summer day.

An ardent fan of James Joyce, Gertrude Stein and Glenn Gould, Nowakowski was also the best person in Poland to undertake translating the works of Michael Joyce: *afternoon, a story* (*popołudnie, pewna historia*, 2011) and *Twilight. A Symphony* (*Zmrok, symfonia*, 2015).

Did you know...

... that the longest hypertext in book form (*Sienkiewicza Street* by Nowakowski) stretches for nearly 10 meters and can be read from any side? *Sienkiewicza Street* employs a visual, comic book like representation of one of the longest high streets in Poland (in Kielce) to tell numerous micro stories about shops, houses, their inhabitants and random pedestrians. In May 2005 it won the 2nd Prize at the International Book Arts Fair Competition in Seoul.



... twenty self-made books by Nowakowski were exhibited on almost every continent and are in special collections of

the National Library in Warsaw, Stanford University Library, Wexford Arts Centre, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Joan Flaxman Library), The New York Public Library, the British Library, Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, Copenhagen Kunstindustrimuseum, and the Book Art Museum in Łódź?



... Nowakowski wrote what could be considered a Borgesian literary MMORPG – a series of digital, branching calligrams entitled *Liberlandia* (2009). Nowakowski encourages *Liberlandia* readers to have their own *Liberlandia* passports and become citizens of this evolving, multi-lingual, textual, labyrinthine state.



The author lives in a village near the Łysogóry mountain range, where he and his wife run the Liberatorium publishing house (www.liberatorium.com).



ANDRZEJ GŁOWACKI'S ARCHETYPURE

Andrzej Głowacki is the kind of artist who combines his creative practices, as an architect and writer, with academic research. He founded his own lab (a rarity in Polish humanities) in Rzeszów and equipped it with a digital cave for literary experiments. However, for this author AR technology is no gimmick and its use is inscribed into his consequent theoretical, educational and artistic practice.

The key theoretical and practical category for Głowacki is empathy, which he understands as designing his works in such a way that they invite the user to leave their trace and co-create the work (Głowacki founded a scientific journal devoted to these problems, titled *CyberEmpathy*). In his work, he draws on his experience as a successful architect. He produces most of his works with his laboratory team, with which he works on applications using AR technology or spatial cave writing. One of their

works is *Archetyptura* (2011). The print book has only QR codes and minimalist illustrations, which refer the reader to the electronic work, which in turn invites her to leave their mark (drawing, writing) on the print book. But Głowacki's team explores also more unusual platforms for e-lit, including tea bags, bed sheets or bow ties.

They describe these projects with the neologism "archetypture," composed of the words "literature," "architecture," and "archetype."



KATARZYNA GIEŁŻYŃSKA'S

VIDEO POEMS AND THEIR TRANSLATION

Katarzyna Giełżyńska is a Prague-based artist, who works for Czech television designing graphics and opening credits. After hours, she uses her talents to create minimalist video poems. Mixing clever visual and linguistic puns with philosophical pondering, she strives no less than to describe the world. In 2012 Katarzyna Giełżyńska published a collection of poems titled *Con(du)it* (“Conduit” is the name of the font used in the poems). In 2014 together with Aleksandra Małecka she embarked on the task of translating the collection, using a multimedia approach, which involved redoing some of the pieces with new sound and graphics. Both volumes can be accessed at Ha!art’s website – be sure to compare the two language versions.

Con(du)it in Polish: www.ha.art.pl/gielzynska | *Con(du)it* in English: www.ha.art.pl/conduit

Con(du)it has been included in Volume 3 of the Electronic Literature Collection.



[kastracja]



[castrat(i)on]



[granaty]



[shooter game]



ROZDZIELCZOŚĆ CHLEBA

ART COLLECTIVE AND PUBLISHING HOUSE



Rozdzielczość Chleba [Resolution of Bread] was founded in 2011, nominally as a publishing house, in practice as a social and technological production facility generating new waves in culture. The name of the group references the first act of piracy – described in the pages of the New Testament – committed by Jesus Christ himself by multiplying bread for the people gathered around him.

Rozdzielczość Chleba's poetry series, the centerpiece of their publishing activities, features talented young poets, who see experimentation as fuel for their creative work. Other publications include

books devoted to broadly defined cyberculture, as well as the journal *Nośnik* [Medium], which serves as a platform for the irregular presentation and summary of the group's interventions. Alongside



publishing, the collective also holds performances and artistic interventions, which combine literature, intermedia and visual arts. Rozdzielczość Chleba's activity is entirely non-profit, and its publications and documentation of many artistic interventions can be downloaded freely. The members of the group are: Leszek Onak, Łukasz Podgórn i and Piotr Puldzian Płucienniczak.

Rozdzielczość Chleba has been described in popular weeklies, art magazines and academic books as a phenomenon unique not only for Poland, but for the entire region. The analyses underline the group's uncompromising approach to copyright and the economy of the field of art/literature, its consequent realization of its independent program and the promotion of what is described as cyberculture. Rozdzielczość Chleba's most recent project is its

cyberhobo movement [*cyberzulerstwo*], in which its members explore the artistic and aesthetic consequences of Internet addiction, sitting glued to a computer and lack of physical activity other than scrolling images. Another successful project is ZUSwave, which has gained great popularity, as a surprising and pleasing combination of post-internet aesthetics and decor characteristic of the early phase of Polish capitalism. The computerization of the ZUS (the Polish Social Insurance Institution) cost more than NASA's mission to Mars – this calculation sheds a new light on the complexity of the relationship between society and technology... In the nearest future the group is planning escapades to the areas of *copyright piracy*, motorization and cybersex.

Website: <http://śc-ch.pl>

OBIJEKT CHRONIONY



AGENCJA O
TELEFON (22) 61
0001 944 944

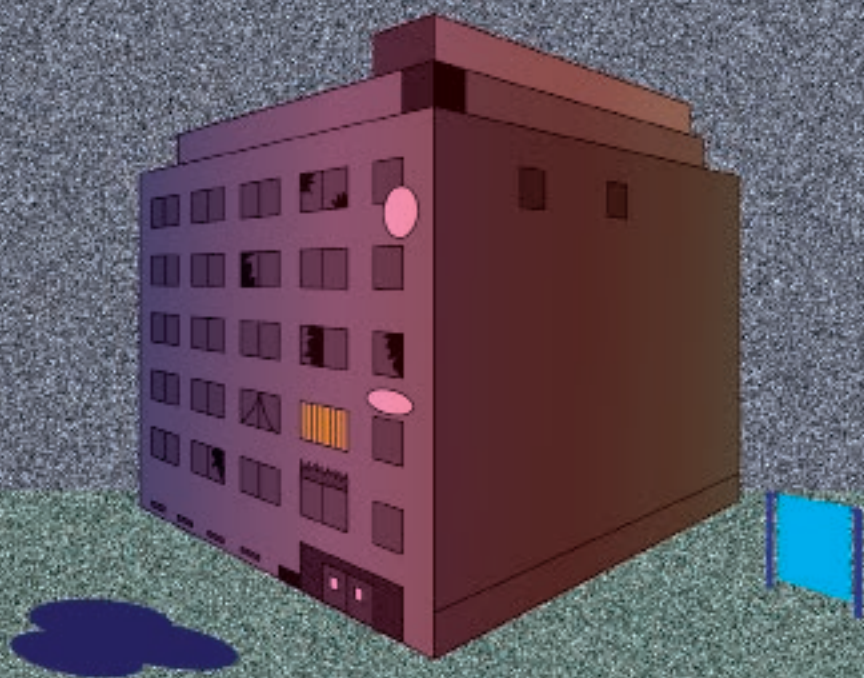


PARTS

Zakład







KELETI BLOKK BLOCKS

Blokowisko

Dear Pen Pal,

My name is Slavko, I am eleven years old and I live in Eastern Europe. My English teacher told me to write to you and tell you about my home. Because for some time now there is no more Russian in schools, but English. In the student's book there were a lot of useless expressions, like tiles or local community. I had to look up in the dictionary how to say *blokowisko* in English. I found: "residential district consisting of large blocks of flats." Mom said she wasn't sure that was it and maybe you don't have such a word.

So, to explain: in the past there were some wise people, who wanted all people, whether rich or poor, to live in comfortable and modern conditions. They wanted people to stop living in houses, to which there leads a trail of mud, and to live in blocks of flats for many families, to which there is a road, and from where it is close to work, to the park and to the store. But this was the communist's idea, and everything that came from the communists is bad, so now again there are houses being built, and there are trails of mud leading to them, because developers are for building houses, not for building roads, and the municipal authorities are for yet something else (mom says I should write that this is typical for periphery countries).

So, anyway, something went wrong with those wise people's ideas, because there is no park anymore, there are new houses there, with a trail of mud leading to them, and instead of going to the store, we drive to a supermarket in the suburbs. This is because there is no bakery or grocery store anymore – but there are other stores. Like the store with English second hand clothing or German chemical products. There are also places where you can take out a loan, remove a simlock or duplicate your keys.

And, thanks to European subsidies, we have a football (soccer) field in our neighborhood, but the field is closed, because it is unclear who should pay the janitor (the municipal authorities are for something else). There is also a new lawn, because on the old one there was no grass, only dirt. Now there is grass, but you cannot walk on it, because you will ruin it. There is a sign that informs us about that: "Don't step on the grass."

In a *blokowisko* it is very important whether someone is rich or poor. Those who are rich always block the sidewalk with a big car. Those who are poor block the sidewalk with an even bigger car. Moreover, rich or poor, every-one has a satellite antenna and

a burglar alarm, because, as the Eastern European saying advises "What is guarded, God guards." This is probably why there recently appeared a big fence around our block and now we can't play anymore with children from the neighboring block.

The corridors are common space. Common space is a place where you can't keep a bike, because, as the neighbor says, this is a common space. In the past there used to be a lot of glass from broken bottles, but since we have the fence, only common space is left.

And now a bit about the apartment. In the times where there was Russian in school, the apartments were all the same. Everyone has their own all-in-one sofa, and in the dining room there was a Plywood wall unit, and in the wall unit there was crystal glass from Bulgaria. Now, when there is English in schools, they are also all the same, because everyone does their own euro-renovation, but what counts is who does it first. In order to do your euro-renovation you need to buy European furniture, that is furniture that is too large for our small rooms. For instance, in my room, after the euro-renovation, in order to turn on the light, you need to move the

desk, and in order to sit at the desk, you have to fold the bed. Moreover, after the euro-renovation there is no more dining room, but a salon, and no more wall unit, but a drink bar, and in the drink bar there is duralex glassware instead of crystal glass. If you don't have money, it's enough to buy the duralex, hide the crystals in the closet (you never know), and just call the rest by different names. What you must buy is a shower with a radio and massager, but you have to watch out for the water not to spill on the floor, because commie-piping cannot handle the euro-water inflow.

Another thing that changed are the colors of our blocks. They say they used to be all gray, with plaster falling off. Today the plaster falls off too, but the blocks are colorful, with colors like lemon yellow or fuchsia. Mom says this is because my countrymen, and especially Lech Wałęsa, fought for freedom, and freedom means you are free to do anything. For instance you are free to have a business and advertise it, and this is why there is freedom to cover all the windows in our block with a large ad for mayonnaise. And people are free to build up their balconies with columns in a European style – Doric, Ionic or Corinthian.

So a lot changes after the euro-renovation, but one thing that does not are noises. In the day you hear the neighbors fighting or going to the toilet. And in the night you hear trucks backing up. Mom says it's because we are a transit country. After I looked up all these words in the dictionary, I asked Mom between what countries was this transit, if all the countries around are periphery countries and Mom said that between the West and the West. I don't understand any of this, perhaps you can explain this to me, since you live there.

I think that's all. If you want to know more about *blokowisko* and housing blocks, I invite you to our Facebook game. It may seem surprising to you, but *blokowiska* in Eastern Europe differ between countries, as much as the countries themselves. Maybe you are surprised that we have Internet in our blocks. Until quite recently, the neighbors would arrange to come together and hang cables between windows. But then the wind would blow and tear the cables down. One time Dad tried to catch a cable flying in the wind like that, but it hit him in the face. Luckily, now there is Wi-Fi and you don't have to make arrangements with anyone, you just have to hack their password.

Yours, SLAVKO

Keleti blokk bloki (Hungarian for “the blocks of the Eastern Bloc”)

is a Facebook game, in which participants try to identify the geographical location of housing blocks from Google Street View screenshots. The game challenges the popular belief that housing blocks look identical from East Germany to Vladivostok and works to undermine the image of the Eastern Bloc as a monolith, shaped by the discourse of the West. “Keleti blokk bloki” is an interesting subject for inquiry at the junction of visual anthropology

(the semiotics of urban space seen through the lens of the Street View camera), sociology (researching stereotypes about each country of the Eastern bloc, which are – successfully or not – applied by the participants), and digital textuality (the participants’ justifications of their guesses take on the form of short prose forms). “Keleti blokk bloki” has inspired at least two digital literary forms: flash non-fiction and street view reportage.

RULES OF THE GAME

The objective of the game is to guess the country of a block posted by another participant. As the name “Keleti blokk bloki” indicates, the buildings can come from any location in the “keleti blokk.” The pictures, mostly screenshots from Google Street View, are posted by the participants on the game’s Facebook group. The players can censor fragments of the picture, which seem too characteristic, in order to make the guessing more difficult.

The objects most often erased include road signs, car brand signs, air conditioning, signs with names of institutions, national symbols. What remains is architecture and details (curtains, sidewalk curbs, colors of the buildings) and the general visual context. The guessing involves venturing hundreds of stereotypes and myths, which sometimes prove useful, and sometimes prove misleading.

KAMIKADZE LOGGIA

a DIY addition to the block, out of all kinds of building material. It is found in countries, in which during the transformation construction law was absent or was a dead letter, that is in most of the former republics of the USSR. It is used as a storage room, fridge, studio, extra room or patio.

AIR CONDITIONERS

for obvious reasons, they can be found in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. For less obvious ones – in all of Russia, including Siberia. Preliminary research suggests this is due to overproduction of air conditioners in the USSR.

HIGH WHITE CURBS

they are found predominantly in the former republics of the USSR, due to fear of sneaky imperialist potato bugs, as well as antipathy towards cyclists – cultural representatives of the rotten West.

Lace curtains with the decorative motive of geese – a specialty of former German Democratic Republic. They are also observed in countries aspiring to German civilization, like the Czech Republic or Slovenia. Sometimes, they are also hung – but this requires training in history – in a country aspiring to Roman civilization, that is Romania.

THE MAJORITY OF CARS ARE SUVs

– characteristic of countries, for which the coveted an unequalled model of empowerment is oligarchy – Bulgaria, Moldavia, Ukraine.

PRIVATIZATION OF ELEVATION PAINTING

flourishes in the countries with the fastest plummeting social network indexes – Poland and Russia. This also occurs in Ukraine, though recently less frequently.



KATARZYNA BAZARNIK

k.bazarnik@uj.edu.pl,

zenkasi@ha.art.pl

Jagiellonian University, Kraków

literary scholar, editor &
translator

keywords: liberature, experi-
mental writing, materiality of
the book, James Joyce



MARIUSZ PISARSKI

mariusz.pisarski@ha.art.pl

University of Warsaw

researcher, producer &
translator

keywords: hypertext archeol-
ogy, adaptation, intersemiotic
narratives



ZENON FAJFER

zenkasi@wp.pl,

zenkasi@ha.art.pl

independent artist, Kraków
poet, editor & theorist of
liberature

keywords: poetry, liberature,
emanational form, invisible
texts, space and time of the
literary work



KAJA PUTO

kaja.puto@ha.art.pl

Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków
journalist, editor & translator

keywords: Eastern Europe,
postcolonialism, ideological
criticism



MONIKA GÓRSKA-OLEŚŃSKA

ikagorska@gmail.com,

mgorska@uni.opole.pl
University of Opole, Opole
scholar, researcher & translator

keywords: digital poetry,
electronic literature, new media
art, art & science intersections,
cybercultures



PIOTR MARECKI

piotr.marecki@ha.art.pl

Korporacja Ha!art,
Jagiellonian University, Krakow
researcher, publisher &
translator

keywords: decentering,
demoscene, subcultures, exper-
imental translation, conceptual
writing



PIOTR PULDZIAN PŁUCIENNICZAK

piotr@puldzian.net

artist, sociologist & activist
Rozdzielczość Chleba, Warsaw

keywords: electronic literature,
netart, piracy, social insurance
esthetics



ALEKSANDRA MAŁECKA

aleksandra.malecka@ha.art.pl

Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków
translator & editor

keywords: translation studies,
experimental translation



JANOTA

katarzyna.janota@ha.art.pl

designer & artist
Korporacja Ha!art, Kraków

keywords: usability, neuro-
mancer, text design, Fliegender
Schlesier

In this publication:

↪ Katarzyna Bazarnik wrote the articles about literature and emotional texts.

↪ Katarzyna Bazarnik and Mariusz Pisarski prepared the text about Radosław Nowakowski.

↪ Monika Górską-Olesińska wrote about Stanisław Lem and Stanisław Dróżdż.

↪ Zenon Fajfer contributed his text about the notion of „the experimental.”

↪ Aleksandra Małecka wrote the note about Katarzyna Gieżyńska.

↪ Aleksandra Małecka and Mariusz Pisarski wrote the article about translations.

↪ Aleksandra Małecka and Piotr Marecki wrote about palindromes, and Andrzej Głowacki.

↪ Mariusz Pisarski wrote about Polish pre-digital literature of the baroque period, Jan Potocki, Michael Joyce and Wojciech Bruszewski.

Piotr Marecki wrote about pre-digital trolling, Schulz, Stanisław Czycz, the demoscene, and Żuk Piwkowski.

↪ Kaja Puto wrote about keleti blokk blocks.

↪ Piotr Puldzian Płucienniczak wrote about Rozdzielczość Chleba.

↪ Aleksandra Małecka and Piotr Marecki conceived and coordinated the project.

↪ Aleksandra Małecka edited the texts.

↪ Katarzyna Janota designed the graphics.

*Polish Impact. A guide
for foreigners to Polish
electronic, experimental and
otherwise unconventional
literature, ed. Aleksandra
Małecka & Piotr Marecki,*

Kraków 2015

Design & Illustrations:

Katarzyna Janota

Copyright: the Authors
and Korporacja Ha!art

Published by Korporacja
Ha!art, pl. Szczepański 3a,
31-011 Kraków

<http://www.ha.art.pl/>

ISBN 978-83-64057-71-7

**Ministry of
Culture
and National
Heritage of
the Republic
of Poland**

*The publication was
supported by The Ministry
of Culture and National
Heritage of The Republic
of Poland*

*Publikację dofinansowano
ze środków Ministerstwa
Kultury i Dziedzictwa
Narodowego*



ISBN 978-83-64057-71-7

Polish Impact



9 788364 057717

7 1

