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Affordances of the Book: A Tentative Typology of Liberature

KATARZYNA BAZARNIK

As a consequence of technological developments, the printed codex has become the most widespread form used to accommodate literary works. As it is the staple form of the book, its bibliographical code has become practically invisible. Moreover, today, due to the digital revolution, the printed codex is but one of the forms in which traditionally conceived literary texts can be distributed. However, 'liberature' is a literary genre that draws the reader's attention to the book because it recognises and utilises the semantic potential of the material carrier of writing. The liberatic work integrates the materiality and visuality of the printed book into the writerly repertoire in such a way that the material book becomes a complex, multimodal sign. It also functions as a navigational tool for reading.

This chapter offers a tentative typology of ways in which liberatic writers make use of latent semantic affordances of the book. The three major interventions in the (traditional) codex form include [re]arrangements, structural modifications and material modifications. Consequently, books modified in these ways can be called 'enhanced codices'. In such works, the typically transparent space of the book becomes an enhanced space of literary communication. In addition, liberature embraces non-codexical forms such as the scroll or the accordion (leporello), 'the shuffle book' or 'book-in-the-box'. Finally, it may be argued that augmented reality (AR) books should be included in this typology.

‘Le monde est fait pour aboutir à un beau livre’ – ‘The world was made in order to result in a beautiful book’, declared Stéphane Mallarmé¹ when he envisaged a work so all-encompassing that it could enclose the whole world within it. A century later, Polish poet Zenon Fajfer coined the term ‘liberature’ to make clear that a book can be an all-encompassing work.² Noting that some authors, including Mallarmé, integrate visual and material properties of print into their writerly repertoire, he suggested that this results in a kind of wholistic book. It is a work that speaks not only with words, but also typography, layout, structure and materiality. He argued that this type of writing ought to be given a name that reflects its specificity. Hence, liberature – his compound of literature and the Latin *liber*, which means both ‘book’ and ‘free’ – points to the fusion of text and its material carrier in an integral entity.

Admittedly, a comparable sensitivity to material properties is also evident in artists’ books. This broad term covers a range of forms, from volumes juxtaposing text and images, as is the case in the *livre d’artiste* known in the French tradition,³ through photo albums in democratic mass editions,⁴ to book works,⁵ i.e. unique, carefully crafted art objects in which the artist intervenes in a random volume, sculpts in printed matter, or otherwise alludes to the shape of the codex.⁶ As artistic works, they require a different inter-

¹ Frederic Chase St. Aubyn, *Stéphane Mallarmé* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 23.

² Zenon Fajfer ‘Liberatura. Aneks do słownika terminów literackich’, *Dekada Literacka*, no. 5/6 (153/154) (1999): 8–9.

³ See Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, *Esthétique du livre d’artiste. Une introduction à l’art contemporain* (Paris: Jean Michel Place/Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997); Jean Khalfa *The Dialogue Between Painting and Poetry: Livres d’artistes, 1874–1999* (Cambridge: Black Apollo Press, 2001); and Elza Adamowicz ‘The *livre d’artiste* in Twentieth-Century France’, *French Studies* 63, no. 3 (2009).

⁴ Dieter Roth’s works and Ed Ruscha’s *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* are cases in point, as ‘seminal to the development of modern artist’s books’. Des Cowley and Clare Williamson, *The World of the Book* (Victoria: The Miegunyah Press, 2007), 212.

⁵ The term proposed by Clive Phillpot in ‘Books, Bookworks, Book Objects, Artists’ Books’, *Artforum* 20.9 (1982): 77–79. See also Garrett Stewart, *Bookwork: Medium to Object to Concept to Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁶ Examples are numerous; an exemplification of the first type may be Andrew Malone’s hand-cut one-of-a-kind book *The Observer’s Book of British Birds* (UCA Archives Blog, accessed 1 February 2019, <https://ucaarchives.wordpress.com/2017/02/26/artists-books-at-canterbury-the-observers-book-of-british-birds-andrew-malone-2010/>; see also <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/465489311460468462/>). Another type includes Zbigniew Sałaj’s artworks, presented as part of Polish Book Art Collection (<http://kolekcja.bookart.pl/info/view->

pretive approach than traditional books, one that privileges their aesthetic, visual aspects, disregarding a philological interest in text, if indeed there is any.⁷ Such books may suggest meanings exclusively through qualities of material texture, paper, format, graphic design, colour, etc., while text may not appear in them at all.⁸ As Megan L. Benton notes in 'The Book as Art', 'the less a book must accommodate focused, attentive reading, the more freely it may strive instead to engage us as art'.⁹ She also remarks that this is especially the case when the book engages the reader with 'its beauty, originality, or other striking or provocative qualities *independently*' from the text (emphasis mine). When the text recedes into the background, the reader is prompted to appreciate its aesthetics – its visual, sculptural and architectural-conceptual qualities – and the book itself emerges as 'a meaningful work of art'.¹⁰

Likewise, communication studies, book history, bibliographical and textual scholarship acknowledge the book as an expressive object characterised by meaningful materiality. Benton also stresses that 'the material features of books have always been an essential part of their appeal and meaning. [...] Often the physical book is not merely a peripheral device for textual content but is an essential element of what we perceive and interpret'.¹¹ In *The Tex-*

pub/tid/3/pid/47), such as *Soft Book*, a paper sculpture made from a thick codex cut to a rounded shape (<http://kolekcja.bookart.pl/info/viewpub/tid/4/pid/89>). Finally, they can be as remote from the codex as Sarah Bodman and Tom Sowden's *Ø – Cherry Blossom Island Tree* (<http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/people/sarah-bodman/sbg30.htm>).

⁷ A good example of this attitude is Johanna Drucker's study *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary, 1995) and Małgorzata Dawidek Gryglicka's *Historia tekstu wizualnego. Polska po 1967 roku* [A History of Visual Text. Poland after 1967] (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2012). These outstanding studies contain extensive analyses and interpretation, only marginally dealing with the literary analysis of text.

⁸ For more on the similarities and differences between artists' books and liberature, see Katarzyna Bazarnik, 'Liberature: Literature in the Space of the Book', in *Les espaces du livre: supports et acteurs de la création texte/image (XXe–XXIe siècles) / Spaces of the Book: Materials and Agents of the Text/Image Creation (20th–21st centuries)*, eds. Isabelle Chol and Jean Khalfa (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015) and *Liberature. A Book-Bound Genre* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2016), 41–45; and Agnieszka Przybyszewska, *Liberackość dzieła literackiego* [Liberariness of the Literary Work] (Łódź: University of Łódź Press, 2015), 282–283.

⁹ Megan L. Benton, 'The Book as Art', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, eds. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell, 2007), 494.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

tual Condition, Jerome McGann notes that in fact any text is ‘a laced network of linguistic and bibliographical codes’, by which he means visual and material properties of the book.¹² Commenting on the entanglement of materiality and meaning, Geoffrey Nunberg observes that ‘[s]ocial practice has turned the physical properties of the book – its bulk, its palpable inscription in space, its materially discrete pagination, its covers – into both interpretive and social resources’.¹³ However, as the scholars remark, these resources are typically used by publishers and their teams – editors, typographers, book designers and printers – and only rarely by writers themselves.¹⁴ Hence, the physical properties of the book constitute a kind of social or institutional discourse; in fact, the material form of the book has attracted increased attention from scholars who nowadays study it under the auspices of multimodality studies.¹⁵

On this, McGann remarks that ‘[a]uthorship is a special form of human communicative exchange’ in which ‘editors and publishers function as the means by which a text’s interactions with its audience(s) is first objectively hypothesised and tested’.¹⁶ Conversely, in liberature it is writers who author or significantly contribute to the authorship of the bibliographical code, becoming active agents in designing the interaction McGann mentions. They devise or participate in devising ways in which their texts can engage and affect readers *interdependently* with striking, provocative, unconventional forms of their presentation in the space of the book. Thus, in agreement with Fajfer, I have expounded elsewhere that

liberature should be understood as a kind of book-bound writing with a clear literary dominant, in which all other dimensions are subservient to the linguistic code (Fajfer, 2010). [...] Such works are separate from other forms of literary writing, wherein the author is unconcerned with this (Bazarnik, 2009). So liberature is better understood as a kind of ‘expanded’ literature, aware of its spatial, embodied nature, and of the semantic dimension of the

¹² Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 13.

¹³ Geoffrey Nunberg, ‘Introduction’, in *The Future of the Book. With an Afterword by Umberto Eco*, ed. Geoffrey Nunberg (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 15.

¹⁴ For further discussion of this, see Annette Gilbert, ed., *Publishing as Artistic Practice* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).

¹⁵ See Christoph Bläsi’s chapter in the present volume.

¹⁶ McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 64.

material form, often demonstrating ‘self-awareness’ in self-reflective or metatextual comments.¹⁷

Admittedly, in the past this was often an exceptional situation. Commenting on two editions of William Blake’s *Jerusalem*, one prepared by the poet himself and the other by David V. Erdmann, McGann offers an illuminating remark on this aspect of authorship: ‘To read a Blake text in an original or a facsimile is to be told that “author’s intentions” dominate the bibliographical signifiers in the same way that they dominate the linguistic signifiers’.¹⁸ This is immediately followed by his reservation that Blake is unique in this respect, ‘precisely because of his effort to bring every aspect of the signifying process, linguistic as well as bibliographical, under authorial control’.¹⁹ But in *The Black Riders*, a study of modernist and postmodernist poets, the textual scholar already notes that the turn of the 20th century marks an increased authorial involvement in exploring the ‘expressive book design’ to expand ‘spaces of signification’.²⁰ This perhaps calls for ‘rethink[ing] the idea of literature by addressing texts as designed products’,²¹ especially given that the number of such literary works has been growing recently. It is in response to this increase that Jessica Pressman identifies the ‘aesthetics of bookishness’, which she describes as a kind of poetics, evident in the contemporary novel, that ‘exploit[s] the power of the print page in ways that draw attention to the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies’;²² and, prior to her, that Fajfer proposed the idea of liberature.²³

Both terms throw into relief the book as a meaningful component of a literary work. But what is *the book*? It can be tentatively described as an object consisting of information coded in some linguistic (and/or non-linguistic) notation, inscribed on some material vehicle, which ensures it can be easily

¹⁷ Bazarnik, *Liberature. A Book-Bound Genre*, 43.

¹⁸ McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 57.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jerome McGann, *Black Riders, The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 80.

²¹ Matthew James Vechinski, ‘The Design of Fiction and the Fiction of Design: Revisiting the Idea of Literature through the Study of Design’, *Textual Practice* 27 (2013): 270, accessed 20 January 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2012.727017>.

²² Jessica Pressman, ‘The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature’, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 48, no. 4 (2009): 465–482, ProQuest, accessed 14 March 2014.

²³ For a historical overview of the concept of ‘bookishness’, see Bernhard Metz’s chapter in the present volume.

recorded, accessed and decoded. As such, the book is historically and technologically contingent.²⁴ Its form has changed over the ages and across continents from the clay tablet, the scroll and the accordion-like folded sheet to the codex, i.e. a collection of bound pages fastened together with a cover. As a physical object, the book appears as a (more or less) coherent combination of elements occupying a certain materially delimited space. Its historical forms throw into stark relief how individual pieces, gathered together within the confines of a physical form, suggest a whole. This impression stems from what Gestalt psychologists call the principles of (good) continuity and of closure.²⁵ This means that, although pages in the codex contain physically distinct blocks of text, we are predisposed to perceive them as a ‘continuous’ flow, disregarding material spaces separating the text such as margins and gutters, as if the text were inscribed on a scroll.²⁶ The sequential structure of text presented in the codex, with its clearly marked beginning and end and substantial middle, conveys a sense of purpose, direction and completeness. When the codex is a carrier (or container) of a literary text – a narrative, or a sequence of lyrics – as its material embodiment, the very structure enacts Aristotle’s linear structure of plot. On the other hand, textual apparatuses such as footnotes and endnotes, glosses, indexes, appendixes, tables of content and other paratexts can suggest non-linear connections between textual units within a single text and even texts external to it. Though this may foreground fragmentariness, these features of text organisation underscore the interconnectedness of textual units, enhancing the impression of cohesion. Hence the book emerges as an epitome of a whole.

We are currently witnessing the transformation of the codex into the e-book, that is a digital document distributed through different electronic platforms: PCs, laptops, e-book readers, tablets and mobile phones. Though it can retain the structural organisation of text into a continual sequence of units (sentences, paragraphs, chapters), it can be also structured as a hyper-

²⁴ Krzysztof Migoń, ‘Książka’ [Book], in *Encyklopedia książki, Vol. 1*, eds. Anna Żbikowska-Migoń and Marta Skalska-Zlat (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017), 103.

²⁵ Max Wertheimer, ‘Gestalt Theory’, in *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology*, ed. Willis D. Ellis (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007 [1938]), 1–11. See also Alison Gibbons’ subchapter ‘Visual Perception’, in *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature* (New York; Abingdon: Routledge 2012), 42–45.

²⁶ In fact, the codex came into being from folded and cut sections of the scroll.

text, i.e. a network of textual units. So instead of one sequence of lexias²⁷ determined by the structure of the codex, 'the connections of a hypertext are organised into paths that make operational sense to author and reader. Each topic may participate in several paths, and its significance will depend upon which paths the reader has travelled in order to arrive at that topic'.²⁸ David J. Bolter claims that, unlike in print where only few such paths can be 'suggested or followed' (for example, by an index or footnotes), and where they 'must always contend with the fixed order of the pages of the book', the electronic variant of such an organisation of text allows for a richer interconnectedness among its units, for their simultaneous hierarchical and non-hierarchical ordering in which 'every path defines an equally convincing and appropriate reading. [...] A text as a network has no univocal sense; it is a multiplicity without the imposition of the principle of domination'.²⁹ Consequently, the reading experience resembles watching movable elements of a kaleidoscope that restructure themselves into different patterns in the reader's eye. Or rather, reading becomes a more self-reflexive activity, requiring the reader to make choices, take decisions, collaborate with the text and navigate it in order to move forward in reading. Because they require more work from the readers, Espen Aarseth calls such texts 'ergodic'.³⁰

An overt necessity to choose reading paths and the (more or less) different sequences of the text that are encountered as a consequence weaken the effect of perceiving the book as a stable unity. The sense of a stable whole, associated with the concept of 'the book', is beginning to dissolve. Perhaps in the wake of this, contemporary literary works respond by questioning and examining themselves as wholes, including re-arrangements and de-constructions of their material forms. Liberature seems to exemplify this tension. Many liberatic works deal with it both on thematic and formal levels by exploring the structural possibilities entailed in the codex form. Focused on its bookhood, liberature plays freely with different historical forms of the book, modifies them and seeks alternative ways of accommodating text in

²⁷ The term, borrowed from Roland Barthes, denotes a unit of text in the electronic hypertext. Cf. George P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0. Critical Theory and New Media in an Era of Globalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006 [1992]), 3.

²⁸ David J. Bolter, *Writing Space. The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, NJ; Hove; and London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 24.

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁰ Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1.

the material space of inscription. This is possible because when, increasingly, the print-based book's function as a storage device for information is relativised, the book can be perceived as an object to be looked at, opened at random, leafed through and experienced haptically.

This brings a boost to a reflection on various latent affordances of the codex. William Gaver explains how such a process can happen: 'People perceive the environment directly in terms of its potentials for action, without significant intermediate stages involving memory or inferences. [...] An affordance of an object, such as one for climbing, refers to attributes of both the object and the actor'.³¹ So the affordance is an apparent way in which one can use an object for a purpose, or perform an action taking advantage of its qualities. Moreover, such explorations are fostered by the development of digital technologies. As writing is now tantamount to working with word processor programmes, which allow writers to edit their texts themselves, some of them take advantage of using different fonts and typographic arrangements. Creative use of typography and layout may facilitate further experimentation. Last but not least, confronted with seemingly 'immaterial' electronic texts, the materiality of the book is becoming noticeable, too: some thick books are printed on very light or very heavy paper; different papers have different textures and bring about different connotations. In a market flooded with standardised, mass-produced prints, untypical, irregular formats can be perceived as significant, drawing the readers' attention to the form and making them wonder about motivations for these deviations from standards.

Of course, provocative or striking ways of using affordances of the codex in literary works have been explored before. Some early instances in literary writing can be provided by the staple example of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, the 18th century playful, satirical (anti)novel by Laurence Sterne. An obvious property of the sequential arrangement of pages is that they can be counted and numbered, and likewise chapters in a volume. In Volume IV of Sterne's novel, readers encounter a numeric gap between chapters XXIII and XXV. In case they overlook it, the homodiegetic narrator remarks that 'there is a whole chapter wanting here – and a chasm of ten pages made in the book by it – but the book-binder is

³¹ William W. Gaver, 'Technology Affordances', CHI'91. Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. Reaching through technology (1991): 79–80. ACM Digital Library, accessed 20 January 2016.

neither a fool, or a knave, or a puppy – nor is the book a jot more imperfect, (at least upon that score) – but, on the contrary, the book is more perfect and complete by wanting the chapter, than having it’.³² This prompts the readers to take note of the pagination and even the printing imposition,³³ and perhaps reflect on their belief in the completeness of the story. The narrative (in)completeness of Shandy’s (fictional) autobiography is reflected in the (in)complete text inscribed in the (in)complete volume. Not only is it utopian to tell an exhaustive story of one’s life, it is even more impossible to produce a complete book, suggests Sterne’s hero. A similar half-serious, half-playful material intervention in the codex is a torn corner of the front cover of *(O)patrzanie* (which may be translated as ‘Ga(u)ze’), a book I authored with Zenon Fajfer (see Fig. 1). The separated piece is inserted into the book, so the two fragments – one large, the other small – are simultaneously held together and apart. Conceptually, they form a whole; materially, they are incomplete. This sometimes prompts readers to repair the damage. The gesture may be read as a kind of performative interpretation of the title, as *opatrzanie* read without the brackets means ‘dressing a wound’,³⁴ thus drawing attention to the ‘body’ of the book.

Another spur to a growing number of such explorations may be related to the fact that digital technologies are becoming increasingly efficient means of transmitting and (arguably) storing information, including literary contents. Novels, poems, and short stories can be published either as printed

³² Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London: Penguin, 1759–66 [2003]), 271–282.

³³ Printing imposition is the arrangement of text blocks on a sheet of paper to be printed. Its effects with regard to the book may differ depending on an edition. For example, the Penguin edition of 2003 contains chapter XXIII on the verso page 271, and chapter XXV on the recto of this page, numbered 282. Materially, pages 271 and 282 are on the same sheet. Hence, though the pagination does skip ten numbers, the gap remains a fictional one. In contrast, the Wordsworth Classics edition of 1996 has chapters XXIII and XXV on facing pages, numbered 208 and 219, so the reader can see that the pages are physically missing (they could have been omitted during bookbinding). Finally, the 2010 Visual Editions *Tristram Shandy* underscores the omission by a material gesture: the inner edges of the removed pages are left in the book’s gutter.

³⁴ Moreover, the title, which is a homophone for ‘looking’, foreshadows the reader’s possible response (O! Look!) to the first page of the book, which is entirely black. For further interpretations of this detail, see Emiliano Ranocchi, ‘Liberature and Person: An Anthropological Question’, in *Incarnations of Material Textuality. From Modernism to Liberature*, eds. Katarzyna Bazarnik and Izabela Curyłło-Klag (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 107–118.

volumes or e-books, or both. Consequently, authors are increasingly faced with a choice about the medium in which they offer their works to the readers.³⁵ In this context, a deliberate decision to publish one's work as printed matter stimulates a reflection on its affordances, just as happened in the case of our *Oka-leczenie*.³⁶ Another case in point is Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, a novel that does not have an electronic or audiobook format, and that heavily explores the bibliographical code and material spaces of the codex form. Not only does it include several typefaces, differentiating between types of documents (reports, notes, diary entries) and their (fictional) authors, it also varies the page layout and plays with footnotes, framed texts and images to underscore the three-dimensional space of the book.³⁷ In some editions, it uses colour (red or blue, or grey in black-and-white versions) to highlight the eponymous 'house'. In effect, the space of the volume becomes an intricate, labyrinthine space the readers need to explore actively, just as the protagonists explore the interior of the house. Chapters set in various fonts not only reflect different 'authorships'; it is as if they correspond to different parts of the house. The layout of some pages requires the reader to move their eyes along text that runs upwards or diagonally, or that is scattered randomly. For example, on page 431, the words are arranged in a way that is suggestive of the oval shape, so the reader must read the text moving her eyes either in a circular manner or 'jump' downward from one side of the page to the other. This eye movement, different from the one typically used in reading, makes her aware of the width of the page. This is in tune with the meaning communicated in words about the protagonist's perception of space: 'Sometimes the hallway widens until at one point Navidson swears he is moving down some enormous plateau'.³⁸ Some passages are printed upside down, so it is even necessary to rotate the whole book. This happens quite quickly over the space of several dozen pages as the amount

³⁵ For example, I believe many scholars can testify to the pressure *not* to publish their monographs in the printed book form.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion, see Bazarnik, *Liberature. A Book-Bound Genre*, 16–20.

³⁷ Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), full colour edition. This widely discussed book has gained the status of a modern classic; so far it has been analysed in many articles and two monographs: Joe Bray and Alison Gibbons, eds., *Mark Z. Danielewski* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2012); Sascha Pöhlmann, ed., *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012). Another, more recent example of such a labyrinthine book-space is Louis Armand's *The Combinations* (London: Equus Press, 2016).

³⁸ Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.31.

of text is rather scarce here. This speedy manipulation of the book, or ‘motion reading’,³⁹ can have a dizzying effect on the reader, again parallel with the feelings experienced by the characters who are investigating the house’s confusing interiors.⁴⁰

Another possibility is to use materially different pages, and Sterne does this as well: once when he includes the black page that marks the moment of pastor Yorick’s death, and another time when a page of marble paper is inserted in the sequence of ordinary sheets, preceded by the narratorial comment that it also demands reading as a ‘motley emblem’ of his work.⁴¹ These pages may be interpreted as flagging moments of emotional intensity: death or exasperation; and, simultaneously, as practical jokes played on the readers. They also draw attention to the multimodality of cognitive processes, as if Sterne were aware that in order to render a ‘historybook [...] of what passes in a man’s own mind’,⁴² one needs to account for both intellectual and sensory perception. Hence, scholars such as Alison Gibbons,⁴³ Linda Pillière,⁴⁴ Christoph Bläsi,⁴⁵ and myself point out that once a literary text is recognised as a complex node where linguistic and non-linguistic modes ‘complement each other semantically to produce a single textual phenomenon’,⁴⁶ only a multimodal analysis can pay heed to its complexity.

³⁹ For more on this kind of reading, see Jesse Stommel, ‘Toward an Interactive Criticism: *House of Leaves* as Haptic Interface’, *Hybrid Pedagogy* [online] (2014), accessed 20 January 2019 <http://hybridpedagogy.org/toward-interactive-criticism-house-leaves-haptic-interface/>.

⁴⁰ For analyses of the reader’s activity, see Alison Gibbons, *Multimodality, Cognition and Experimental Literature*; Bertrand Bourgeois and Veronique Duché, ‘When the Reader Wanders through the House-Book: From Goncourt’s *La Maison d’un artiste* (1881) to Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000)’, in *Les espaces du livre: Supports et acteurs de la création texte/image (XXe–XXIe siècles) / Spaces of the Book: Materials and Agents of the Text/Image Creation (20th–21st centuries)*, eds. Isabelle Chol and Jean Khalfa (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015); and Bazarnik, *Literature. A Book-Bound Genre*.

⁴¹ Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (Bookpoint: Wordsworth Classics, 1996), 155, 157–158; and Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (2003), 204; 205–206.

⁴² Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (2003), 77.

⁴³ Cf. Gibbons, *Multimodality, Cognition and Experimental Literature*.

⁴⁴ Cf. Linda Pillière, ‘Crossing New Frontiers? Investigating Style from a Multimodal Perspective’, *Études de stylistique anglaise* [online] 7 (2014): 139, accessed 20 January 2019, <http://journals.openedition.org/esa/1278>.

⁴⁵ Cf. Christoph Bläsi’s chapter ‘Empirical Preprocessing: Approaches from Multimodality Research for the Printed Book’ in the present volume.

⁴⁶ Terry Royce, qtd. in Pillière, ‘Crossing New Frontiers? Investigating Style from a Multimodal Perspective’.

Such works call for analysis falling within the scope of material culture studies⁴⁷ and multimodal literary analysis⁴⁸ that would take into account not only the literary discourse, but also nuances of the bibliographical code, its non-verbal rhetoric, as well as different book structures. Though scholars have discussed a variety of book forms, especially with regard to artists' books, no systematic overview of such modifications has been offered so far. So, below I offer a tentative typology of ways in which liberature explores and expands the codex, making use of its affordances. I propose to distinguish three major groups related to **(re)arrangements**, **structural modifications** and **material modifications**. They are based on modification of or divergences from the standard codex form, resulting in various types of **enhanced codex**. Finally, I also briefly turn to non-codexical book forms that appear in contemporary creative writing.

(Re)Arrangements

This first, broad category includes books that retain the material structure of the codex, but divert from typographical convention in ways that emphasise its space as something non-transparent or otherwise stress its bookhood: in other words, they are materially metareflexive. This includes cases of meaningful pagination and chapter numbering (such as those described above in *Tristram Shandy*), or works whose size is governed by mathematical constraints on the number of pages, chapters or words, such as Georges Perec's *Life: A User's Manual*,⁴⁹ or, arguably, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.⁵⁰ Another example is repeated parallel pagination of chapters in B. S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal*.⁵¹ Set in a nursing home for old age pensioners, this 'geriatric comedy' consists of eight monologues from the inmates, each of

⁴⁷ Cf. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, and Grzegorz Godlewski, Andrzej Mencwel and Roch Sulima, eds., *Antropologia słowa: zagadnienia i* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2003). For other studies of writing as part of material culture studies see for example Thomas Meier, Michael R. Ott, and Rebecca Sauer, eds., *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken* (Berlin; Boston; Munich: De Gruyter, 2015).

⁴⁸ For examples, see Gibbons, *Multimodality, Cognition and Experimental Literature*; and Bazarnik, *Liberature. A Book-Bound Genre*.

⁴⁹ For details, see Georges Perec, *Life: A User's Manual*, trans. David Bellos (Boston, MA: David R. Godin, 1978[1988]).

⁵⁰ For details, see Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Joyce and Liberature* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2011).

which is paginated anew from 1 to 21 to indicate the simultaneity of events. Louis Armand's novel *The Combinations*, in turn, is specifically 888 pages long to hint at infinity, yet is encircled by an 'OVERTURE' and a 'CODA', paginated from i–xxii and xxiii–xxxviii respectively, as if to suggest the closedness of the fictional world set in 'Golem City'.⁵² Just like *House of Leaves*, it also uses footnotes to prompt the reader's movement across the volume, foregrounding its spatiality, 3-dimensionality and objecthood. It seems that Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*⁵³ can be included here, too, owing to the author's instructions specifying three different ways of reading the book: one linear path, another non-sequential reading following a pattern provided by Cortázar, and a random reading. Such hypertextual organisation brings out the tension between sequential and non-sequential reading paths, and foregrounds the space of the codex as hypertextually arranged, navigable and topographical (it is striking that, thematically, the above-mentioned works are either set in a specific building or city, or have a significant geographical dimension). Hence, we could label them **topographical codices**.

Another type of (re)arrangement involves non-standard *mise-en-page*, in which typography and layout are invested with meaning. It relies on the visual properties of print and the use of other graphic components (non-alphabetic characters, vignettes, drawings, photos, etc.). For example, different speakers or different accents may be distinguished by distinct fonts, as is the case in *Oka-leczenie*. Simulated document types, such as letters, diary entries, newspaper clippings, etc., may be reproduced in different fonts, as in *House of Leaves* and *The Combinations*. Colour may be added to flag letters or words, or to bring out some features or differentiate between elements. Text may run in different directions; it can be arranged into shapes pictorially or diagrammatically related to the linguistic content, inducing dynamic reading movements, as described above in *House of Leaves*. Possibilities seem too vast to be fully catalogued here; what needs to be stressed, though, is that such non-verbal rhetoric is semantically loaded and authorially controlled. It seems that when accumulated in a considerable amount, such typo-

⁵¹ B. S. Johnson, *House Mother Normal*. *B.S. Johnson Omnibus* (London: Picador, 2004).

⁵² Armand, *The Combinations*, xxxviii.

⁵³ Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch*, translated by Gregory Rabassa (London: Pantheon Books, 1987).

graphical (re)arrangements result in a liberatic work that can be dubbed a **typographically (re)arranged codex**.

Next, we need to consider parallel, non-identical printings, or parallel, non-identical editions, such as Ali Smith's *How to Be Both*,⁵⁴ a novel published deliberately in two different, parallel versions. Both contain the same stories: one set in the present, the other in the past, interconnected by the figures of the main protagonists, printed in alternative orders. The formal duplication is thematically connected to the intertwining plots, so it can be argued that it is only both books considered together that constitute *one* work. Likewise, Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*⁵⁵ have appeared in several slightly but meaningfully different editions. We may see them either as cases of (re)arrangement, or possibly as **structural modifications**.

Structural Modifications

Structural modifications pertain to interventions in the physical structure of the codex so that, in effect, the form becomes expanded physically. This is why parallel, non-identical editions such as those described above may be seen as **expanded** or, more precisely, **multiplied codices**, which taken together form **a constellated book**. When we deal with a single **expanded codex**, such modifications entail elements attached to a page, or fixed between pages, which can be opened, unfolded or spread. For example, it can be an envelope with a letter glued to the page or in between the pages, as in *The Bats of the New Republic* by Zacchary Thomas Dodson.⁵⁶ A mixture of cowboy adventure, historical romance, dystopian science fiction, and 'illuminated' novel, it 'cumulatively becomes a book about the way books are made and the way stories work', concludes the review in *The Washington Post*.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ali Smith, *How to Be Both* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2014).

⁵⁵ Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007).

⁵⁶ Zacchary Thomas Dodson, *The Bats of the New Republic* (New York: Doubleday, 2015).

⁵⁷ Keith Donohue, 'Bats of the Republic review: Two Intertwined and Echoing Stories', *The Washington Post*, 6 October 2015, accessed 25 February 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/bats-of-the-republic-review-two-intertwined-and-echoing-stories/2015/10/06/d0e45c8a-6c65-11e5-9bfe-e59f5e244f92_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8d32d7f8ed54.

Noting the ‘interactive elements’, Kathi Inman Berens⁵⁸ classifies Dodson’s novel as a print-bound specimen of the playable book genre, which she defines as ‘a story object that can be held in human hands, requires physical interaction between human and computer to render, and outputs a story experience that can be ‘bound’ or is otherwise finite’.⁵⁹ Such additions are not infrequent in young adult adventure or fantasy books, just as pop-up structures are,⁶⁰ yet it remains to be verified whether they are designed by writers to be integral components of the narrative, or whether they are book designer’s embellishments to attract young readers and boost sales.

But liberature authors for adults do resort to similar material modifications, too. Fajfer himself has a long poem printed on a folded accordion sheet in the volume of poems *Widok z głębokiej wieży* [‘View from a Deep Tower’].⁶¹ Entitled ‘The Balcony’, it extends from the book just as the eponymous architectural detail does.⁶² Several accordion inserts feature in Adam Thirlwell’s *Kapow!*,⁶³ a narrative that attempts to recount some events during the Arab Spring. Parts of the narrative are printed on such accordion sheets, arabesqued with variously orientated textual blocks, which spread out from the book like flying carpets (see Fig. 2). There are also half-gate spreads in it, so the book really extends itself beyond the limits of its covers, while in a metatextual comment the first-person narrator explains that he ‘just cherished this idea of writing something that would keep unfolding out of itself, a story that would take in as many stories as possible’, evidently alluding to the Arabic classic *One Thousand and One Nights*.⁶⁴ So, gate

⁵⁸ I thank Prof. Berens for both drawing my attention to this novel, and, indeed, a copy I am using to write this article.

⁵⁹ Kathleen Inman Berens, ‘Rewards: Books, Boundedness and Reading in Participatory Culture’, (Digital Humanities Conference 2017, Book of Abstracts online), accessed 20 February 2019, <https://dh2017.adho.org/abstracts/595/595.pdf>. Other ‘playable books’ include Nick Bantock’s *Griffin and Sabine Trilogy* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1991–1993). Its appeal largely rests on the inclusion of numerous actual envelopes with physical letters that the reader has to/can remove. My thanks go to the anonymous reviewers for providing me with this example and other useful suggestions.

⁶⁰ I have not been able to track down any liberatic books for mature readers with pop-ups.

⁶¹ Zenon Fajfer, *Widok z głębokiej wieży* (Szczecin-Bezrzecze: Wyd. Forma, 2015).

⁶² For an interpretation of the poem, see my article ‘A Stroll through Polish Leporellos: Some ‘Liberatic’ and Other Accordion-Folded Works’, in *Die Geschichte(n) gefalteter Bücher*, ed. Christoph B. Schulz (Hildesheim; Zurich; New York: Olms, 2019, pp. 487–510).

⁶³ Adam Thirlwell, *Kapow!* (London: Visual Editions 2012).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

spreads and cut-outs are other possible structural modifications for the expanded codex. Thirlwell's publisher Visual Editions has offered a *tour de force* of the latter in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*⁶⁵ (see Fig. 3). It is Foer's 'ghost' narrative, based on a repurposed edition of Bruno Schulz's collection of short stories entitled *The Street of Crocodiles*.⁶⁶ Tom Philips' *A Humument* is a similar, **appropriated codex**, in which he transforms a Victorian novel into a verbo-visual story about a Mr Toge and his adventures.⁶⁷

Raymond Queneau's *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* [A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems],⁶⁸ in turn, contains 10 sonnets, all using the same rhymes, whose verses are cut into individual, movable strips. In effect, the book turns into a 'machine' for producing the incredible number of poems named in the title. The category of the **structurally modified codex** should also include forms such as *tête-bêche* (for example, Danielewski's *Only Revolutions*,⁶⁹ and Fajfer's bilingual edition of poems *Dwadzieścia jeden liter / Ten Letters*⁷⁰), *dos-à-dos* and its extended variants of multiple interconnected volumes (in German called *ein Mehrlingsbuch*, otherwise a **multiple codex**), of which *Oka-leczenie* and *Nagelvaste Kalktriller*⁷¹ are examples (see Fig. 4). Finally, there is also the 'unbound codex', or **the book-in-a-box**, which Nick Montfort and Zuzana Husárová suggest calling **the shuffle book**, in which unbound pages or booklets are gathered in a container.⁷² Perhaps the best known example is B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*,⁷³ an auto-

⁶⁵ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Tree of Codes* (London: Visual Editions, 2010).

⁶⁶ Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles*, trans. Celina Wieniewska (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977).

⁶⁷ Tom Philips, *A Humument*, 5th ed. (London: Thames and Hudson: 2016).

⁶⁸ Raymond Queneau, *Cent Mille Millions de Poèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

⁶⁹ Mark Z. Danielewski, *Only Revolutions* (London: Doubleday, 2006).

⁷⁰ Zenon Fajfer, *Dwadzieścia jeden liter / Ten Letters*, trans. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010).

⁷¹ *Nagelvaste Kalktriller* is a collaborative novel, written by five authors: Kine Brettschneider, Ineke van Doorn, Harry van Doveren, Veronique Hogervorst and Arnoud Rigter (Zeeblind, 2015), in five volumes connected by the covers. As I was informed by the authors in conversation during the Brussels Underground Poetry Festival (10–13 September 2015), it was inspired by images of *Oka-leczenie* they encountered on the Internet.

⁷² Nick Montfort and Zuzana Husárová, 'Shuffle Literature and The Hand of Fate' (*The Electronic Book Review: Electropoetics*, 5 August 2012), accessed 18 February 2016, <https://electronicbookreview.com/essay/shuffle-literature-and-the-hand-of-fate/>. For an overview of the form, see Martin Côme's 'Unbox the Story: a Look at Contemporary Shuffle Narratives', in *The Poetics of Fragmentation in Contemporary British and American Fiction*, ed. Vanessa Guignery and Wojciech Drąg (Wilmington and Malaga: Vernon Press, 2019).

⁷³ B. S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Picador, 1999).

biographical narrative mixing memories of the past with the present experiences of one day in a random city (see Fig. 5). This form, however, might better fit in the category of the non-codexical book, discussed below.

Material Modifications

The third category – **the materially modified codex** – is connected with using materials other than paper as the printing surface. It may include transparent plastic, metal, or fabric sheets, and wooden slates, concrete, glass or sandpaper as covers. Andrzej Bednarczyk's bilingual volume of poems entitled *The Temple of Stone*⁷⁴ is bound in two slates of concrete, thus lending the codex the quality of a sculpture (see Fig. 6). The book has a square hole cut in the middle; inside it, there is a piece of rock glued to the back cover. So, in every poem in the collection, there appears a combination of words and rock, the ideal(istic) and the material(istic), but also words and images, since the book is complemented with photographs of the Tatra Mountains. Thus, poetic effect is achieved by figures of speech and the palpable body of the book. Another, equally stunning example is Hsia Yü's *Pink Noise*,⁷⁵ a collection of poems carved from 'found material', printed on transparent sheets in black (English) and pink (Chinese) (see Fig. 7). The author collected dozens of phrases from long dead poets, but also spam mail or search engine results, which she translated using *Sherlock*, an Apple search engine with an automatic translation function, and then retranslated the texts obtained using this method several times until the results were satisfactory.⁷⁶ Using this material, she aimed at achieving 'letristic noise', a linguistic, poetic equivalent to 'all these great noise and low frequency acoustic art

⁷⁴ Andrzej Bednarczyk, *The Temple of Stone / Świątynia kamienia*, trans. Barbara Kutyba (Kraków: Stowarzyszenie Pisarzy Polskich, 1995).

⁷⁵ Hsia Yü, *Pink Noise*, 2nd ed. (Taipei: self-published, 2008), n.p.

⁷⁶ Her method is akin to that of Flarf poets. Flarf is a 21st century poetic practice that originated in New York, in which a community of poets compose poems from Google search results, which they circulate between members of a group, changing and revising them at the same time. The results are semi-coherent, linguistically incorrect, stumbling, jarring poetic texts. One of its founding members, Gary Sullivan describes it as 'a kind of corrosive, cute, or cloying awfulness. Wrong. Un-P.C. Out of control. "Not okay"'. ('Flarf', Glossary of Poetic Terms, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/flarf>, accessed 7 November 2019).

CDs'.⁷⁷ Neither book is a one-of-a-kind item; they were each published in an edition and distributed by booksellers, which is an important aspect of the liberatic work, perhaps in contrast to the artist's book.

It is again arguable whether books containing QR codes, or other technologies that enable web pages to open, could be described as a materially modified codex, or an expanded one. Although they entail the experience of a different type of materiality (of an electronic device: a smartphone or a computer), they function as devices activating another medium (or another interface) rather than materially hybrid objects. The already established name **augmented reality (AR) books** thus seems more adequate, as it flags that their content is expanded into the e-space. Zenon Fajfer's *Powieki*⁷⁸, however, a collection of poems hypertextually and topographically arranged in a printed codex and on a CD that contains its hypertextual, electronic version, deliberately plays off the contrast of the two materialities. Likewise, the same medial-material contrast is explored in his *ten letters* (2010). Another example that could arguably be described as liberature is Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse's *Between Page and Screen*⁷⁹, in which the printed codex contains QR codes activating the appearance of text on a computer screen. They can be seen as codices expanded by electronic devices, or perhaps hybrids of the print and the digital.

⁷⁷ Yü, *Pink Noise*, n.p.

⁷⁸ Zenon Fajfer, *Powieki* [Eyelids] (Szczecin-Bezrzecze: Wyd. Forma, 2013).

⁷⁹ Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse, *Between Page and Screen* (Los Angeles: Siglio, 2012).

Non-Codexical Literary Books

All the above-mentioned forms pertain to cases in which the typically transparent space of the conventional book becomes an enhanced space of literary communication. They may therefore be called **enhanced codices**. Liberatic authors, however, take advantage of other, historical forms of the book as well. One notorious example is Zenon Fajfer's *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę*.⁸⁰ It is a poem printed on a transparent sheet, folded into a scroll and placed in a transparent glass bottle (see Fig. 8). The lyrical 'I' wonders if anyone will be so bold as to 'break the screen' and let the 'genie' out of its confines. This clue is not only an intertextual allusion to an Eastern fairy tale, but also a suggestion about how to read the poem's emanational form.⁸¹ Again, the linguistic meaning is enhanced by non-verbal metaphors in ways similar to those discussed in the enhanced codices. Beside such an **enhanced scroll**, and the above-mentioned 'shuffle books', the **leporello (accordion) book** is another form featuring in liberature. Since I have discussed it extensively elsewhere, I only flag here Radosław Nowakowski's *Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce*⁸² (see Fig. 9) and Anne Carson's *Nox*⁸³ as prime examples.

Conclusion

What seems to connect all these **enhanced codices** and **non-codexical forms** is the concept of the book as a coherent body of text(s) placed in an enclosed, more or less precisely delimited fraction of space, involving a multisensory perception of and ergodic interaction with the text. Even if the boundaries of thus delimited space are fuzzy, gapped or possibly spectral, and such a work consists of separated parts that are perceived as fragments, the fragment always presupposes a whole. So the book is present here, even

⁸⁰ Zenon Fajfer, *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę* [Looking through the Ozone Hole] (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2004).

⁸¹ For a demonstration of the emanational poem, see the online version of Zenon Fajfer's 'Ars Poetica' (Polish and English version), *Electronic Literature Collection 3*, ed. Stephanie Boluk, Leonardo Flores, Jacob Garbe, and Anastasia Salter (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Electronic Literature Organization, February 2016), accessed 10 March 2020, <http://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=ars-poetica>.

⁸² Radosław Nowakowski, *Ulica Sienkiewicza w Kielcach / Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce* (Kielce: BWA, 2003).

⁸³ Anne Carson, *Nox* (New York: New Directions, 2010).

if only in a kind of shadowy, spectral way. As such, it is related to 'aesthetical notions of reconstruction, myth, and metaxis' that Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker identify as indicative of metamodernism.⁸⁴ This is in tune with Emiliano Ranocchi's diagnosis of 'liberature as a literary movement [which] can be seen as an answer to the erasure of the body in the Western literary tradition. This has a particular resonance in a posthuman landscape' where information seems to be translated easily (and liberally) from one medium into another, apparently without any loss or modification.⁸⁵ Ranocchi observes that liberature belies this conviction in a persuasive way; it has, as he claims, 'potential instruments to deal with the posthuman world in a non-reactionary way by involving the body in a new discourse: casting light on the role of context proves that, only when embodied, information really makes sense'.⁸⁶ This context, this body, is the material book in all its enhanced forms described above.

⁸⁴ Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2, no. 1 (2010): 2, accessed 29 September 2017, doi:10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677.

⁸⁵ Ranocchi, 'Liberature and Person', 113.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Affordances of the Book

Illustrations

Fig. 1: Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik, *(O)patrzenie* (2009 [2003]).

Katarzyna Bazarnik

Fig. 2: Adam Thirwell, *Kapow!* (2012).

Affordances of the Book

Fig. 3: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Tree of Codes* (2010).

Katarzyna Bazarnik

Fig. 4: Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Oka-leczenie* (2009 [2000]).

Affordances of the Book

Fig. 5: B. S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Picador, 1999) and the Polish translation published by Ha!art in 2008.

Katarzyna Bazarnik

Fig. 6: Andrzej Bednarczyk, *The Temple of Stone* (1995).

Affordances of the Book

Fig. 7: Hsia Yü, *Pink Noise* (2008).

Fig. 8: Zenon Fajfer, *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę* (2004).

Affordances of the Book

Fig. 9: Radosław Nowakowski, *Sienkiewicza Street in Kielce* (2003).

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