

Monika Jaworska-Witkowska

KUJAWY AND POMORZE UNIVERSITY IN BYDGOSZCZ

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1874-7175>

SUBSTANTIAL, SPATIAL, VISUAL TEXTS ON EXPERIMENTING WITH POETRY, FORM, STRUCTURE AND READING

“The discoverer of multiplanar synoptism wanted the sensory experience of the poem to be an effect of **visual effort**”¹.

“A word has “skin” (...), a specific aesthetic structure with a visual and word tension”.

The process of freeing art from the rules disciplining words and their structure, indirectly (and probably unintentionally) led to a beneficial cognitive situation in the area of educational practices related to divergent field training when it comes to creative actions. Cognitive behaviours generating a multitude of various problematic and artistically transformative solutions, heterogeneous behaviours often with a known, conventional material became possible and desirable. That is why in the history of experimental poetry, the prototype of modern visual and spatial *mix(medio) texts*, as well as its transformation into new trends and waves² found their treatment in the article, with a relevance for the pedagogy of readings. This is an educating example and a good illustration of how one can and should exercise cognitively in educational situation on every stage of education, because this is about among other creating “poetry which can be considered universally, meant to be used by everyone”³. “The art and creativity of the 21st century will be of the *ecology of mind* as was said by Gregory Bateson”

¹ A. Pétronio about N. Beauduino, p. 46.

² A comparative and historical analysis with example of poetic works can be about in J. Donguy, 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna. Epoka cyfrowa (1953–2007)*, Gdańsk and A. Kremer, 2015, *Przypadki poezji konkretnej. Studia pięciu książek*, Warszawa.

³ See J. Donguy, 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna...*, op. cit., p. 22.

and this J. Donguy⁴ quote is paradigmatic and perspective here because it corresponds to the concept of cybersemiosis and chaosmos (Guattari), it shows the move from the static to the genetic of text⁵.

SUBSTANTIAL AND CONSTELLATIONS IN THE "LABORATORY OF LANGUAGE". ABOUT THE SPECIAL FOCUS ON WORD, SIDE AND THINGS TO "PUSH THE SCREAMS WITH MATTER"

"I like your "substantial poetry" title.
Before I called my poems **constellations** I was seriously considering calling them **substantials**"⁶

Substantial art, as a phenomenon close to visual arts, by giving form to things, creates reality, which previously existed only in the mind. Moving forms (thoughts, imaginations, metaphors) into a substantial space (for interpretation and communication is the escape of *significant specks* of man and small, fragmented forms of his external activity. The aesthetising cognitive space created in such a manner forms a difficult synthesis of content, aesthetics, thought, concept, intention, emotion and values, substantiated in the materialised (textual and visual) intellectual and artistic activity. Individual and caught up in the vortex of reinterpretation and overlapping of thought. This characteristic can be supported by Yoshiara's statement that "works of art are screams pushed by matter" (J. Donguy, 2014, p. 24).

Reism⁷ uses mostly the spatial and artistic potential of the plane of the page and the possibilities of typography as the art of design. What is more

⁴ Ibidem, p. 319.

⁵ See genotekst M. Lenoble, [in:] J. Donguy, 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna*, op. cit., p. 319.

⁶ A fragment to a letter sent by Gomringer to Pignatari in 1956, see J. Donguy, 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna...*, op. cit., p. 25. Both creators were precursors of the Brazilian substantial poetry movement.

⁷ It should also be pointed out that reism is an artistic, boundary, image-word movement/genre/literary trend which encompasses a whole range of experimental works created under this name. As part of theoretical-comparative research it is often pointed to the common space of substantial, abstract, sound, spatial, visual

reism, as a literary art of a metalinguistic character, taking inspiration from architecture, painting, *design*, became a broader term encompassing the poetic and linguistic explorations which “common trait is the observation of the material and its structure” (Kremer, 2015, p. 143) as well as the reduction of syntax, words, simplification of rules, elimination of punctuation, disturbances of the linearity of print.

A synthesis of content and aesthetics in word-spatial constructs or other forms of graphic texts gives a chance to search the space *between*. The typography, construction of the page and the spatial and visual organisation of the text creates the sense and shapes meaning, it breaks the “transparency” of text⁸ by bringing out the visual characteristics. This is an important, for the psychopedagogy of creativity, chance to stimulate the artistic and linguistic activity of pupils and students.

The value, both of the operation of searching as well as free space (“silence” on the page) between the deconstructed compositions through which the post-conventional thought slips through, is known to modern pedagogic theory⁹. Substantial texts, by focusing on the objective realisation of expressive forms, “the visibility of letters” and the individual, “private” interpretation of the content focused in the “substantial” to be intellectually and emotionally picked up, also have experimental tasks: the cautious, concentrated on detail, on “meaningful specks” of searching for new forms of effective communication and movement of cognitive content. Each communication is also an exchange of specific substances and a transformation of matter in a cycle of movement of the renewable meanings. Thus the substantial is an individual example of creative solution (for example photo montage, words-structures), a theme of creative remediations, independent of the used typography, visualization, analogy, material or place of cognitive cuts or epistemological barriers. Treatment of thought fragments is substantial, focused on the individualized cogni-

poetry and *performance* poetry. The genesis and central categories of reism as well as the cultural and bi-political determinants are carefully analyzed in A. Kremer, 2015, *Przypadki poezji konkretnej...*, op. cit.; T. Sławek, 1989, *Między literami. Szkice o poezji konkretnej*, Wrocław.

⁸ See the invisibility of the printed text, A. Kremer, 2015, *Przypadki...*, p. 37.

⁹ See M. Jaworska-Witkowska, 2009, *Ku kulturowej koncepcji pedagogiki*, Impuls, Kraków.

tive process, the creation is substantial which while remaining a “small identity” of culture, still provokes the search for expressive meaning of the product-work when it is placed (moved) in a different bio-cultural or utility-ideological context. This last function, the movement of texts (poetry) substantial in new discursive, artistic or interactive conditions, repeated rewriting under a transformative *other* gaze, gives poetry a substantial recycling meaning which renews meanings and space. Substantial texts gain and abuse the new field of meanings by interactively reconstructing (themselves) in new, enlivening, life-giving, difficult and unconventional areas:

“for substantial poetry (...) the writing of the text sometimes is less important than the later gesture of putting it in a new place, incorporating in some order, changing its look, confronting it with other publications.” (Kremer, 2015, p. 20).

The substantial is thus an autonomous, separate, individual and peculiar thing. This case study (of some part)¹⁰, example, pattern or concept, even if a cut up aesthetic idea or a form of constructive typography will create allotropic, unstabilized and seemingly cognitively unfinished images. A lack of arbitrary closure, according to the conventional score of “diligent” and “solid” behaviour, is a rule of creative disorder which gives free space for reflection and allowing for a movement of creative thought. And even a slow thought focused on itself and at the same time materialised in relation to the surface of the page/structure of the book. A self-reflective form is a place (area) of the training of difference, otherness, experience, waking up, sensitivity and imagination. Substantials build constellations by the spreading of symbolic spaces related to them and moving interpretations into further and further associations, using redefined writings and giving new meanings to words and new force of expressions to the medial and intermedial superpositions materialized

¹⁰ Kremer writes about this: “In order to assess the roles of commentaries, illustrations and other textual and graphic elements, one must **analyse the whole book**. Such an approach first of all..., p. 62). Case studies have become commonplace in humanities, see E. Domańska, 2010, *Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka?*, „Teksty Drugie” no 1–2, p. 44–45, etc., p. 64.

in the substantial. The approach proposed here, by going beyond the formal reality of print, its transparency, uses the artistic techniques of the construction of text applying not only the typography, spacing, graphical elements, spatial organisation of the page but also handwriting, crossing out, hand underlines, colour use, word spacing, headings and spacing out of print. The potential meaning of the paratext is also used: blotch, crossing out which covers the words, illegible scribbles, notes, smudged ink, blurry text, handwritten signals, surprising empty space (for example pages with no print) the intention of which is clear to an interactive, cooperating reader. Each publication realized according to its own rules is a substantial textual proposition. Thanks to the non-text elements what is substantial gains additional symbolic space aligning texts into constellation fields, which can be fully seen. Constellations are based on original layouts of words, configurations of unconventional uses (spacing) of concepts and senses and they open new analysis areas, deepen the linguistic consciousness and exercise the symbolic culture. The term “constellation” itself come from a text by Mallarmé: “nothing will have place but constellations” and works similarly to an ideogram. In a broad understanding, creating constellations is applying the rules of creative marking of concept areas, grouping of ideas which creates areas of *action* of a given category and its merits by reduction, putting words together, repetitions, combinations and page surface tension. We guide through the substantial text, discuss it, being caught by the textual and work-picture connotations that open up because concretism “remained a **‘laboratory of language’** linguistic creativity, focusing on the testing of the possibilities of language and writing” (Kremer, 2015, p. 75) where not only matter and typography matter but also the spatial relation of particular words and their contextual movement are important. Those meaningful wholes are often the effect of teamwork and are a direct encouragement for a reader to cooperate interactively.

The forms synthesising different expressive means in a language are also a space for thinking about individual psycho-epistemologies (C. Nosal), which allow to be observed and marked as part of creative action on the material of experimental prose, also the concrete one, and – as will be shown – in the area of literature practice.

No! A wordmontage



THE “SOUND MELODY” METHOD READING LIKE SONG

The method of creating poetry by means of the “melody of sounds”, usable in the creation of different texts of culture, is the proposition of Anton Webern¹¹, which is based on creating (constructing) a visual dynamic of the text by using illustrative typography which imitates melody: colours, syllable divisions, letter movement, differing frequency of page usage. Leading (the melody of) writing may be put together or even confronted with the melody/method of reading of the text in cognition of *other* mode. The transplanted of this method, a technique in truth, to the area of pedagogy broadens the repertoire of cognitive actions freeing the creative production and **re-citation** in the cognitive space but it is also possible to deepen the diagnostics of communicational gestures in interpersonal relations, including the multicultural, borderline, difficult, distorted, blocked. They are cases (substantials) of creating ideograms (ideographies) where one

¹¹ See J. Donguy, 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna...*, op. cit., p. 30.

analyses the means of marking places and concepts on a page, the ways of determining space and defining distance, for example between two people. The mental enlivening of space, here the page by convention¹², is a process which is aimed at enlivening movement, motivation, projection of emotion and unconscious energies. Semantic use of space and light, typography and the visual, movement of field of *action* of the text is a concept of constructing new meaning. For the pedagogy of meaning this denotes a dynamic favouring creativity and freeing meaning by weakening the restrictions disciplining of intellectual work.

**“TO FORESEE THE BOOK” – THE OPEN ART VS. OPEN WORK
 (“THE FRAGMENTED AND EXCHANGEABLE”
 DEBATE OF H. DE CAMPOS AND U. ECO)**

To foresee and then to make it materially visible in/to communication and mental enlivening of mental design is task which needs intellectual activity and dynamising it visual and spatial solutions. Establishing the visual and spatial text, with the usage of the available linguistic matter, is also a decision, both theoretical and artistic, and in consequence discursive and persuasive. The act of choosing means and courses of thought decides about the effectiveness of text which can be a text without aim, as a thought provocation, with place where the content and intention breaks, blocking the flow of thought, revising knowledge and communicative effectiveness. The products of the consumption of thought from the reading and inspiration of open art, with an instruction of the reading of signs, can be realised in different ways.

**TEXT DELETED BECAUSE WRITTEN.
 A CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION OF DRAFT OF (FROM) ONESELF**

Passages, fragments of words, content created by partially deleting (crossing out, blurring) or hiding text or by other visual tactics are also an explicit text for interpretation and this in a double meaning: the reading of the content itself and the reading of the meaning of the stylisation of text, so its

¹² The choice of space in which the creative process happens is left to the poet-creator.

writing. Paratext is a conceptual decision made in advance but interpretative for readers, though an alternative area of writing. The ways content, words are spaced out, how empty space is used, the strategies of hiding and showing texts is an additional dimension of the *signified*. Empty spaces instead of staying quiet with textual “silence” scream the more loudly as they impose on perception:

The visible can be unintelligible, transparent. Those characteristics of the *signified* are used by the poetics of possible poetry, ready to cooperate with the reader. The reading here **progresses, goes step by step, runs around or walks around** the text, it **explores** parts of content, the *universe* of perceptive possibilities. And this not the only possible context of the category of deletion. We also know the psychoanalytic road to the maturing of the concept as an action of **writing from oneself** the internalized trauma and unconscious emotional growths to which we can have access using the structure of language (Lacan) or by tracking identity in narrations.

REISTIC TASKS ON TEXTS.

SUBSTITUTING “THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAN WITH THE LYRICAL OBSESSION OF MATTER”¹³ (SUBSTANTIAL CONSTELLATIONS)

Experimenting with visual abstraction, thought or letter, or the sign in itself, is a type of gestural imaging with an explicit discursive content. This is also the aesthetic dimension of substantial poetry. But not only. “Abstract poetry freed the word from its connotations... and it appreciates each words in conjunction with another”, as Kurt Schwitters narrows down the search for alternative poetic forms (see: J. Donguy, 2014, p. 17).

By exercising in exposing value and emotion, which are hardly accessible otherwise, alternative pairings of media, pedagogy of reading can show the telescopic cognitive kaleidoscope of art, just like that. Visual constructions, symbolic compositions, searching in the realms of the language, concept-montages, free-word poetics are areas of innovative education’s action which – by using mixed media, deepens the contact with people and interpersonal communication. Mindfulness, insight, connotations of unconventional forms and pairings of atypical shapes will become a field of

¹³ Was the expression used but this is thesis from the futuristic literature manifesto from 1912.

the generation of meaning and individual sense forging, managing a game also by establishing a temporary (situational) reality. The graphical space of a constellation is a structural factor, the aesthetic information does not have to dominate of the semantic intent. Although not all of the propositions of substantial poetry (both classic as well as those original below) use the shape of the poem (see: ideograms) or building space (page, books) to realise the material concept of poem. Sometimes it is cognitively enough to build semantic constellation based on an internal construction of a word. In substantial poetry (language/matter) which is here stretched to all forms of experimenting with texts of culture (word/object, poem/object, poem/book, processual, situational, spatial, special etc. texts) it is about focusing on a given example of text which has autonomous cognitive value in itself. Attempts at experimenting with language matter are presented below in content constellations ordered meritoriously, originally titled and realised.

VISUAL POETRY AND THE BODY OF TEXT. EXPLICIT TEXT AND LEGIBLE IMAGES

“Space matters; not only due to the banal and evident reason,
that everything happens in space but also because the fact
where a given action happens
is **inextricable from how they are shaped**”¹⁴

Visual texts use drawings, graphics, collages, photo montages with a possible elimination of the printed word or letter. What is decisive here is the meritorious decision which profiles the textuality and experiments with the visuality of notation and materiality of text or/and the need to explicitly underline the substantial content which cannot be expressed in any other way. The body of the text, using explicit aesthetic effects, can be constructed by image-shapes (*concept-shapes*¹⁵) and their non-textual suggestive communicative elements, even persuasive. Here it is important to clarify that visual poetry is experimenting with language and not only with the look of the writing. The look of a text create also its semantics

¹⁴ Nie-miejsca, p. 9.

¹⁵ “Concept-shapes” is the title of the manifest to Polish concretist, Stanisław Dróżdź (Odra, 12/1968) and also the title of the catalogue of his *Poezja strukturalna* (Structural poetry) exhibition. *Pojęciokształty* (1969).

and spatial thinking about the placement of content, is a proposition (initial point) for educational purposes, especially that the concept often cannot be separated from the strategy of its writing. To write a poem again in this formula would rather mean redrawing it, by previously reading, interpreting and constructing it.

Visual poetry focuses on the visually available content specifications and stratifications of the writing. It uses, among other, images, silence, light, shadows, colour, typography, it plays with legibility, spatial sections, gaps, drawings, graphics, geometry and *design*. The look of the poem, the form of clear possibility, is a simulator of thinking and interpretation as well as different readings, consisting of moving the *signifier* in space, translation of senses, by the effort of interpret the location of content. The writing and usage of visual materials allows not only to show meanings but also for the text to appear in spaces between, in atypical compounds of the matter of text and even in expected paradox and nonsense being revealed. Material elements of writing and image inscription of content allows to bring out senses, impossible to be carried by just the semantics.

The results of original word-image experiments on text structures are shown below with a proposition and encouragement to further transformation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Domańska E., 2010, *Jakiej metodologii potrzebuje współczesna humanistyka?*, „Teksty Drugie” no 1–2.
- Donguy J., 2014, *Poezja eksperymentalna. Epoka cyfrowa (1953–2007)*, Gdańsk.
- Jaworska-Witkowska M., 2009, *Ku kulturowej koncepcji pedagogiki*, Impuls, Kraków.
- Kremer A., 2015, *Przypadki poezji konkretnej. Studia pięciu książek*, Warszawa.
- Sławek T., 1989, *Między literami. Szkice o poezji konkretnej*, Wrocław.