

Liberatic archives: Materials collected by B.S. Johnson as well as Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik*

Katarzyna Biela

ORCID: 0000-0002-7392-2546

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In the past couple of years, I have intensely studied the works of the English avant-garde writer B.S. Johnson and the Polish authors Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik, who pay attention not only to content but also to the materiality of the book. They believe that the material aspects of the text, such as the format of the book, the font, and the page layout, have a significant impact on the reading experience and should correspond to the textual message. Willing to pin down and share their approach, Fajfer and Bazarnik coined the term "liberature," which describes "a kind of creative writing that fuses text with its physical form into an inseparable whole in the space of the book."¹ The interest in the materiality of the book is visible both in their academic essays and articles² as well as in their literary works, such as *(O)patrzenie* [Ga(u)ze] and *Oka-leczenie* [Mute-I-Late] (co-authored by Fajfer and Bazarnik), as well as in Fajfer's poetry³ and plays.⁴

¹ Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Liberature. A Book-bound Genre* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2016), 13.

² See, among others: *Od Joyce'a do liberatury. Szkice o architekturze słowa* [From Joyce to Liberature. Essays on the Architecture of the Word], ed. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2002); Zenon Fajfer, *Liberature or Total Literature*, ed. and trans. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010); Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Joyce & Liberature* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2011); Katarzyna Bazarnik, *Liberature. A Book-bound Genre* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2016); *Refresh the Book: On the Hybrid Nature of the Book in the Age of Electronic Publishing*, ed. Viola Hildebrand-Schat, Katarzyna Bazarnik, Christoph Benjamin Schulz (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021); Katarzyna Bazarnik, "Liberature as World Literature", in: *Polish Literature as World Literature*, ed. Piotr Florczyk, K.A. Wisniewski (New York, London, Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

³ See: Zenon Fajfer, *Powieki* [Eyelids] (Szczecin, Bezzecze: Wydawnictwo Forma, 2013); Zenon Fajfer, *Widok z głębokiej wieży* [A View from the Deep Tower] (Szczecin, Bezzecze: Wydawnictwo Forma, 2015); Zenon Fajfer, *Pieśń słowronka* [The Wordbird's Song] (Szczecin, Bezzecze: Wydawnictwo Forma, 2023).

⁴ See: Zenon Fajfer, *Odlot* [High] (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2019) and Zenon Fajfer, *Uwolnienie* [Liberation], in: *Konkurs Dramaturgiczny STREFY KONTAKTU. Baza Sztuk* [CONTACT ZONES Theater Competition. Plays database], https://strefykontaktu.pl/sk/Baza_sztuk_82, date of access: 11 Aug. 2023).

I was inspired to compare the poetics of liberature with the work of Johnson when I read Fajfer and Bazarnik's 2004 article *A Brief History of Liberature*,⁵ in which they point out how many writers have engaged with the space of the book. Fajfer and Bazarnik mention Johnson, among others, as one of the key figures who greatly contributed to understanding of the book as a medium: "Johnson's *oeuvre* deserves special attention because of its consistently liberary⁶ character. Practically all of his works challenge the format of the traditional novel and instead are characterized by a liberary approach to text, where the format, layout, and typography of the book are subordinated to its demands."⁷ These observations became the starting point for my research on how, on the one hand, we might read Johnson's works through the perspective of liberature and, on the other hand, on how his texts illuminate Fajfer and Bazarnik's concept.⁸

Since not all the works of these authors have been published or studied, I have conducted a significant part of my research in the archives of respectively Johnson and Fajfer and Bazarnik. The materials they collected, and their organizing strategies, allowed me to observe different archival strategies as well as reflect on how their respective collections represent the multimodal nature of their work. It is worth taking a closer look at this in order to devise ways of navigating the respective collections, especially because both have been transferred from private spaces to national libraries and are now accessible to a wide range of readers: the British Library acquired a large archive of B.S. Johnson's papers in 2008 and Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik's papers have been part of the Jagiellonian Library collection since 2022.

Given that liberature is an ahistorical category, insofar as it can also be used to describe works that had been published before the concept was coined,⁹ I shall describe both collections as "liberatic." Let me emphasize, however, that Johnson was not familiar with Fajfer and Bazarnik's poetics and the Polish authors discovered his works only after their first texts on liberature had been published. Hence, the three writers have explored the space of the book in a similar, yet independent, manner. Correspondingly, their archival strategies will share many similarities but also differences, which mostly stem from their unique approaches to multimodal collections.

B.S. Johnson's archive

Before Johnson's collection was made available to the public, his biographer, Jonathan Coe, spent hours in the artist's apartment, trying to make his way through vast amounts of documents and texts.¹⁰ As a result, his biography of Johnson was published much later than he had planned,¹¹ but ultimately the publication brought him well-deserved recognition and encouraged others

⁵ Zenon Fajfer, "A Brief History of Literature (with Katarzyna Bazarnik)", in: Zenon Fajfer, *Liberature or Total Literature*, ed. and trans. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010), 85–92.

⁶ At first, this form was used as an adjective deriving from the word "liberature". With time, it was replaced by the form "liberatic", which I also use throughout this article.

⁷ Fajfer, "A Brief History of Literature (with Katarzyna Bazarnik)", 90.

⁸ Katarzyna Biela, *Encounters in Theatre and Liberature: B.S. Johnson and Zenkasi* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2023).

⁹ Fajfer, "A Brief History of Literature (with Katarzyna Bazarnik)", 85–86.

¹⁰ Interview with Virginia Johnson, 5 March 2017.

¹¹ Jonathan Coe, *Like a Fiery Elephant. The Story of B S. Johnson* (London: Picador, 2004), 202.

to study the experimental writer's *oeuvre*.¹² In 2008, that is four years after the publication of *Like a Fiery Elephant: The Story of B.S. Johnson*, the British Library acquired a large archive of B.S. Johnson's papers and now registered readers can study them in the manuscripts reading room. Items are sorted alphabetically by title and often also by date and type (e.g., first draft, second draft, final draft, press cuttings, correspondence on a specific topic).

The collection of B.S. Johnson's papers consists of, among others, handwritten and typed texts, which allows one to trace the writer's avant-garde creative process. In some cases, for example when a double-column layout is used, the page in the manuscript looks similar to the one in the final publication. Sometimes, however, the manuscript differs from the final form of the work. *The Unfortunates'* unique blank spaces,¹³ which can only be systematized at the typesetting stage, are indicated in the manuscript by dots which separate individual sentences.¹⁴ Although as a published work *The Unfortunates* takes the shape of a novel-in-a-box which resembles a standard book in size, the manuscript is stored in a solid large container, whose size can be comparable to an average shoe box, as it must accommodate handwritten A4 pages.¹⁵ This artifact demonstrates how the writer developed tools that influenced the layout of the page and the format of the book, and then refined them in cooperation with the publisher.

Additionally, in the British Library archives we may find materials which help contextualize Johnson's creative process: newspaper clippings, reviews, playbills, movie scripts as well as production budgets for plays and recordings. Letters to publishers provide insight into the process of publishing books and staging plays while letters exchanged with other writers show British literary life in the 1960s and 1970s. A letter from the Nobel Prize winner Harold Pinter, written in large handwriting, and Samuel Beckett's postcards (which are virtually impossible to decipher) are especially worth noting. Letters exchanged between Johnson and his friend Tony Tillinghast, the prototype of the character of Tony in *The Unfortunates*, have also survived. This part of the archive, although decidedly more traditional, is a useful supplement to manuscripts and typescripts, as well as to Johnson's published and widely available works. It allows one to draw conclusions about the socio-economic conditions in which individual works were created and makes one reflect on how communication with publishers, reviewers, and other writers could have influenced Johnson's creative process.

Both the British Library and the writer's relatives were instrumental in making the collection open to the general public. However, the size and scope of the archive was also determined by Johnson

¹²Publications published after Coe's biography include *Re-reading B.S. Johnson* edited by Philip Tew and Glyn White (2007), *Miriam Havemann's The Subject Rising against its Author. A Poetics of Rebellion* in Bryan Stanley Johnson's *Oeuvre* (2011), *Well Done God! Selected Prose and Drama of B.S. Johnson* edited by Jonathan Coe, Philip Tew and Julia Jordan (2013), *B.S. Johnson and Post-War Literature: Possibilities of the Avant-Garde* edited by Martin Ryle and Julia Jordan (2014), *The B.S. Johnson – Zulfikar Ghose Correspondence* edited by Vanessa Guignery (2015). In 2014, 2015, and 2017, three issues of "BSJ: The B.S. Johnson Journal" were published. In Poland, a special issue of "Literatura na Świecie" [World Literature] was devoted to Johnson in 2008; we find in it, among others, fragments of his works translated by Ewa Kowal. Selected works by Johnson – *The Unfortunates* and *House Mother Normal* – were translated into Polish by Katarzyna Bazarnik and published in the *Korporacja Ha!art's liberatic series* (*Nieszczęśni* (2008) and *Przełożona w normie* (2012)). Johnson's works and biography have also been translated into French and Italian.

¹³B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Picador, 1999). Polish translation: B.S. Johnson, *Nieszczęśni*, trans. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2008).

¹⁴Manuscript in The British Library archives: MS 89001/1/4/2.

¹⁵See manuscripts in The British Library archives: MS 89001/1/4/2 and MS 89001/1/4/4.

himself - as we know from his biography, he carefully collected and organized materials in his home office. Coe draws attention to the bar charts on which the writer marked the number of words written each day, which demonstrate his desire to organize the avant-garde material and monitor his work pace.¹⁶ Likewise, in his letters and budget plans, Johnson comes across as a pragmatic economist and a responsible breadwinner. Still, his emotions also played a role in the creative process, as revealed in the preserved manuscripts. In handwritten plays and letters, Johnson criticizes the conservatism of the church¹⁷ and the sluggishness of publishers – such comments were written with greater panache and frustration than others. The letters exchanged with publishers also show that Johnson wanted to present his works in a very positive light, and that he got understandably irritated when he was rejected or had to introduce radical revisions to his texts.

The archive is also a testament to Johnson's interest in multimodality. It reinforces the image of Johnson as an avant-garde writer, as propagated in widely available books and literary studies¹⁸ – a writer who constantly looked for new ways of conveying meaning through the layout of the page and the format of the book. The collection reveals the variety of media that the writer used at various stages of his artistic career, allowing us to see him not only as a novelist but also as a playwright, director, journalist, and literary critic. This perspective corresponds to the one found in his published works – the collection prepared by the British Film Institute and the *Well Done God!* anthology – which seem to focus on multimodality so characteristic of Johnson's oeuvre. Thanks to such publications, Johnson's broadly available works are no longer limited to prose and poetry but also include plays, films, and press articles.

Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik's archive

The archive of Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik gradually underwent restructuring similar to the one observed in the case of Johnson's collection. At first it was a private archive but since coining the term liberature in 1999, Fajfer and Bazarnik have made the materials available to the public in cooperation with state institutions, specifically public libraries. The collection includes their own works as well as works by the authors who were/are interested in the materiality of the book.

In 2002, the Liberature Reading Room was opened at the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków, whose motto is: "Culture lives in circulation or it does not exist."¹⁹ The collection systematically grew thanks to, among other things, a grant awarded by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.²⁰ Initially, the reading room only had a paper list of books, and not an online catalogue, which limited search options. Over time, a dedicated subpage of the

¹⁶Coe, 193–194.

¹⁷See B.S. Johnson, "Whose Dog Are You?" play for Royal Shakespeare Company (1967), manuscript MS 89001/3/1/13 in The British Library archives.

¹⁸See footnote 11.

¹⁹The history of this archive was recounted during a conversation with Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik on December 15, 2022.

²⁰The project "Wstęp do liberatory!" [Enter liberature!] as part of the "Promoting reading culture. Priority 2 – Development of the book sector and promoting reading culture. Call 2 – May 2008" program.

Małopolska Institute of Culture website was created, and the online catalog was launched; however, it was not completed. Importantly, cooperation with the Małopolska Institute of Culture enabled Fajfer and Bazarnik to promote liberature during meetings organized by the Institute.

In 2010, the Małopolska Institute of Culture library became part of the Voivodeship Public Library in Kraków and was transferred to a new building. Fajfer and Bazarnik agreed to change the location of the liberatic collection on the condition that a separate reading room be arranged for it. The Voivodeship Public Library then decided to house the materials in a brand new building – the Arteteka. The three floors of the new building were labeled respectively “sound”, “image”, and “word”, and the “word” floor was dedicated to Fajfer and Bazarnik’s collection. The new reading room opened in 2012. Books from the catalogue of the Voivodeship Public Library that can be considered liberatic because of their authors’ care for form were also moved there and added to the publications brought by the founders of the liberature concept. Some of the books were made available to the readers on open shelves; other materials were presented in showcases designed especially for this purpose. The exhibition strategy refers to the Unconventional Book Exhibition (*Wystawa Książki Niekonwencjonalnej*) of 1999. During this event, Fajfer and Bazarnik presented their collection several days before the publication of their essay/manifesto *Liberature. Appendix to a Dictionary of Literary Terms*.²¹

Since the liberatic books were displayed in showcases, apart from its documentary value, the archive also had “added” visual value. The arrangement of four showcases reflected the structure of the Italian sonnet: each of fourteen shelves corresponded to one of fourteen lines. In the first showcase, one could see books published before the term liberature had been defined; the authors of these books worked with the traditional codex, experimenting within its format. Such books include, for example, William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, where poetry and images intertwine; Stéphane Mallarmé’s non-linear poem “A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance”; Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, with the famous black page showing the protagonist’s death, or James Joyce’s novels which referred to various forms and genres. The second showcase with four shelves also presented works published before 1999 but in addition to liberatic codices, it also displayed books that went beyond this traditional form, including books-in-a-box: Marc Saporta’s *Composition No. 1*²² and B.S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates*.²³ In the third and fourth showcases (with three shelves each) we find materials created after the publication of Fajfer’s liberatic manifesto; those are mostly texts which transcend the format of the codex, including works composed by Fajfer and Bazarnik themselves. Importantly, all shelves were made of glass, which made it easier to view books from different angles and look at many books at the same time. The curator Tomasz Kalita also suggested that a quote from *Finnegans Wake* should appear at the top of the showcases.

The collection grew and new books were purchased, as recommended by Fajfer and Bazarnik. In addition, the curators independently ordered new books which fit the profile of the reading room. Thanks

²¹Zenon Fajfer (2010 [1999]). “Liberature. Appendix to a Dictionary of Literary Terms”, in: Zenon Fajfer, *Liberature or Total Literature*, ed. and trans. Katarzyna Bazarnik (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010), 22–28.

²²First edition: Marc Saporta, *Composition no. 1* (Paris: Seuil, 1962). English editions: Marc Saporta, *Composition no. 1*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963); Marc Saporta, *Composition no. 1*, Visual Editions, 2011.

²³Johnson, *The Unfortunates*.

to this, the collections began to expand even without the direct involvement of Fajfer and Bazarnik. Furthermore, during the *Iconicity in Language and Literature* conference in 2005, Fajfer and Bazarnik met Professor John White from University College London, who offered to supplement the archive. Professor White kindly gifted, for example, the original German edition of the collage-poetry collection in a box, Herta Müller's *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm* [The Guard Takes His Comb].²⁴

However, the question of the catalog remained unresolved. Fajfer and Bazarnik were the owners of most publications, which caused some legal problems: the books were cataloged and put in a deposit, but, unfortunately, they still could not be included in the catalog of the Voivodeship Public Library on the same basis as other works. They could be read in the reading room, but they could not be borrowed and taken home. Still, such a method of disseminating literature was considered and actively pursued. It proves that the collection was treated as an integral part of the public library, and not as an archive whose goal was to store books and make them available to the readers in the reading room only.

The relocation of the liberature reading room to Arteteka also changed the way the collection was promoted. Fajfer and Bazarnik began to actively present it abroad. Their artistic and academic endeavors were increasingly interrelated, as they began to establish contacts with different universities. Fajfer and Bazarnik promoted the collection through exhibitions and performances, and also discussed it during guest lectures and conferences. They attended festivals and organized workshops, traveling throughout Europe as well as the United States and Asia.²⁵ Numerous trips meant that the liberatic archive began to function in a new way – the collection was housed in the Voivodeship Public Library and at the same time a part of it was used to promote the concept internationally. For this reason, Fajfer and Bazarnik decided to purchase two copies of each new book, so that one copy could travel internationally and the other could be stored in the library. At the same time, as a result of the promotional activities more and more people visited Arteteka. Participants of international conferences and exhibitions who were particularly interested in the books presented by Fajfer and Bazarnik often came to Kraków. The archive was also visited during conferences organized at the Institute of English Studies at the Jagiellonian University, where Bazarnik popularized liberature as Assistant Professor.

In the spring of 2022, the collection was moved to the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków. By that time, it had been almost completely catalogued. Similarly to Johnson's papers, Fajfer and Bazarnik's collection was made available to the public in one of the largest libraries in the country and in a reading room dedicated to rare prints (the Old Prints Reading Room). However, what distinguishes the Kraków archive from that in the British Library is that it was prepared in cooperation with its creators and owners, Fajfer and Bazarnik, who had a say in how materials were catalogued and promoted. Moreover, Fajfer and Bazarnik's archive has

²⁴Herta Müller, *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1993).

²⁵The list of Fajfer and Bazarnik's travels includes: 2009 – exhibition in Bristol; 2010 – stay in Belfast; 2011 – exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Oakland, exhibition and festival in Taipei, Taiwan, lecture in Tokyo, representing Poland at the European Culture Congress in Wrocław (exhibition and workshops); 2012 – conference and exhibition at the University of Kent in Canterbury (England); 2013 and 2014 – Elias Canetti festival in Ruse (Romania), exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia (Bulgaria), sound poetry festival in Craiova (Romania), exhibition and performances at the Polish Culture Festival in Toulouse (France); 2015 – underground poetry festival in Brussels, Electronic Literature Conference in Bergen.

a more complex function than the one storing Johnson's materials. On the one hand, the Kraków collection shows the work of its owners through their books, manuscripts, programs from the festivals they attended, and documents related to the Zenkasi Theatre Association they founded. On the other hand, it is a collection of works that engage with the spatiality of the book, including examples of world literature. The materials are therefore international, with works written in various languages, by people of different gender, both well-known and debuting authors. In addition to widely available texts, the collection also proudly features some unique works, such as B.S. Johnson's *Travelling People*²⁶ or, as has been pointed out above, Herta Müller's *Der Wächter nimmt seinen Kamm*. Moreover, it also features academic publications, which are not necessarily liberatic in nature, but they touch upon the question of multimodality – they discuss the poetics of liberature and related geological issues as well as analyze the works found in the archive. We must also mention the visual aspect of the collection, that is the fact that it also functions as an exhibition. Fajfer and Bazarnik have always seemed to recognize the exhibition value of the liberatic books and the Jagiellonian Library is also planning to add a showcase in which selected publications can be displayed – it will be featured in the part of the building open to the general public (outside of the archive of rare and experimental texts). In Johnson's archive, by contrast, we mainly find documents, manuscripts, and typescripts which are not displayed as part of an open exhibition.

Fajfer and Bazarnik's archive, especially once it was supplemented with academic publications after it had been moved to the Jagiellonian Library, is therefore a comprehensive space for learning and researching liberature; it is a place that unites readers and researchers, offering a wide selection of materials that help one better understand the liberatic unity of content and form as well as experience such unity in the process of reading avant-garde works. On the one hand, this collection is cross-sectional, transcending chronological and geographical divisions and, on the other hand, it demonstrates who Fajfer and Bazarnik are as artists. In this way, it differs from the British archive, which shows primarily Johnson himself - especially his manuscripts, typescripts, and private documents, not his published works. The Polish collection helps one understand Fajfer and Bazarnik, their materials, and their craft, and it also provides insight into the concept they described and the poetics associated with them.

Despite these differences, Fajfer and Bazarnik's collection is similar to Johnson's in the way it documents the unconventional creative process of writing liberatic texts. We also find manuscripts in Fajfer's archive: some of them date back to his work on the triple codex titled *Oka-leczenie*,²⁷ and others include the poem *Widok z usypanego wzgórza* [A View from a Built-up Hill] published in *Odlot* [High].²⁸ The materials also demonstrate how experimental books change over the years. One example is Fajfer and Bazarnik's *(O)patrzenie*, which was first printed in the A5 format²⁹ and later republished in a smaller size to be sold along with *Oka-leczenie*.³⁰

²⁶First edition: B.S. Johnson, *Travelling People* (London: Constable, 1963). Edition available in Fajfer and Bazarnik's liberatic archive: B.S. Johnson, *Travelling People* (London: Transworld, 1964).

²⁷Zenon Fajfer, Katarzyna Bazarnik. *Oka-leczenie* [Mute-I-Late] (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2009).

²⁸Zenon Fajfer, *Odlot* [High] (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2019).

²⁹Katarzyna Bazarnik, Zenon Fajfer, *(O)patrzenie* [Ga(u)ze] (Kraków: Krakowska Alternatywa, 2003).

³⁰Fajfer, Bazarnik, *Oka-leczenie*.

Another case is the poetry collection *dwadzieścia jeden liter/ten letters*³¹, which was officially released in 2010 but the prototype had already been published five years earlier. The poem in a bottle *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę (But Eyeing Like Ozone Whole)*³² was also published in two editions, in 2004 and 2009, respectively. Although after the publication of the second edition, the first was not reissued and the prototypes are not publicly available, all stages of the creative process that led to the final format can be traced in the Jagiellonian Library. In addition, the archive is a testament to Fajfer and Bazarnik's versatility and their interest in multimodality, which corresponds to Johnson's search for the right medium and form of communication. Fajfer is the author of poems, essays, theater plays, and articles. Bazarnik, on the other hand, has most recently been active as an academic, but she also worked as Fajfer's assistant in theater in the 1990s. Last but not least, we must also remember about Fajfer and Bazarnik's international presence. The Jagiellonian Library also features audiovisual materials, for example a recording of a lecture given in Japan or the poetry evening at the Rialto Theater.

As we can see, all three artists (Johnson, Fajfer and Bazarnik) share a similar sensitivity, which allows them to combine unconventionality and creative freedom in their use of media with meticulous organization and documentation of their works, early drafts, and publications. Johnson archived and carefully numbered subsequent drafts of his texts as well as his letters, cost estimates, and other materials, which made it easier for Jonathan Coe to study the sources and recreate various events from Johnson's life to describe them in the writer's biography. As a result, the materials stored in the British Library are also arranged thematically and chronologically, which makes research easier and effective. Similarly, Fajfer and Bazarnik have been collecting liberatic publications for many years. They have also been documenting their own work and its reception, for instance in the form of newspaper clippings and reviews of their plays. Their collection shows that the way of thinking about books and their materiality has changed over time; it also demonstrates Fajfer and Bazarnik's artistic development and the growth of the liberatic series published by the Ha!art publishing house.

Conclusions

Fajfer and Bazarnik, similarly to Johnson's heirs, want to open their unconventional collections to the public and promote them, even though the collected materials with their non-codex formats and fragmentary structures pose challenges in terms of storage and conservation. Both Johnson's as well as Fajfer and Bazarnik's materials may be found in public libraries. The archives present their liberatic books and essays as well as texts which document the publishing process, the production process (in the case of plays), and participation in festivals. The materials made available to the public have similar characteristics, which is why Johnson's collection with its unconventional documents may be consulted in the Manuscripts Reading Room in the British Library and Fajfer and Bazarnik's collection of liberatic books may be viewed in the Old Prints Reading Room of the Jagiellonian Library. Moreover, Johnson's as well as Fajfer and Bazarnik's organizational

³¹Zenon Fajfer, *dwadzieścia jeden liter/ten letters* (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2010).

³²Zenon Fajfer, *Spoglądając przez ozonową dziurę (But Eyeing Like Ozone Whole)* (Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2004). Second edition: 2009.

strategies are similar; they all try to preserve as much as possible and arrange the material carefully as if they felt that it was their responsibility to document the publishing process, their achievements, and reviews. Although Johnson arranged his papers in the 1960s and 1970s, and Fajfer and Bazarnik have been doing it since the 1990s, they all seem to believe that readers do not yet know everything and that they need to be guided through avant-garde collections.

The liberatic archives also show the variety of media and tools used to convey meaning. As it turns out, B.S. Johnson as well as Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik are avant-garde artists who, as collectors, make sure that their archives offer a wide variety of sources and faithfully document the development of their multimodal artistic practices. However, the Polish collection is slightly different in nature because it testifies not only to who its owners are but also to how the concept of liberature they coined can be (re)interpreted in the context of world literature and academic research on the materiality of literature. Therefore, Fajfer and Bazarnik's collection is both an archive and a reading room – it also features works by other authors, including those written before their own debut, as well as critical and academic texts. We may then distinguish between two strategies of organizing liberatic archives: the Polish collection both documents Fajfer and Bazarnik's work and offers additional materials which help understand the book as a medium, while B.S. Johnson's archive focuses on presenting the writer's achievements and the context in which his works were created, showing British literary life in the 1960s through the prism of his personal experiences.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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KEYWORDS

B. S. Johnson

LIBERATURE

ABSTRACT:

The article summarizes four years of my research conducted in the archives of liberatic avant-garde authors: the post-war British writer B.S. Johnson and the Polish artists Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik. Tracking the history of their collections, I pay attention to their multimodal character, corresponding to the authors' unconventional works. I illustrate how Johnson, Fajfer and Bazarnik organise their materials, so as to examine similarities and differences between their ways of handling avant-garde collections.

Zenon Fajfer

Katarzyna Bazarzik

ARCHIVE

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Katarzyna Biela – research and teaching assistant at the Institute of English Studies at the Jagiellonian University. She is the PL of the “Diamond Grant,” researching the theater works of B.S. Johnson and Zenon Fajfer.