

# Weaving the body into text.

## The issue of corporeality in Ilse Garnier's *Blason du corps féminin*

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“Talking about the representation of experience, it is impossible to ignore the body, which becomes an essential point of reference for the human experience”<sup>1</sup> – this sentiment was undoubtedly shared by Ilse Garnier, as she was creating *Blason du corps féminin* [*Blason of the female body*].

*Blason du corps féminin* is a French-language spatial volume, published in 1979 by Éditions André Silvaire<sup>2</sup>. It is a unique volume, not only against the background of Garnier's entire work, but also other concrete poets from the 1960s and 1970s. Its uniqueness is evident in the choice of the subject and the genre declaration. Its most innovative aspect, however, is the form of the poems, combining the word and the line (early examples of concrete poetry were usually based on letters alone). In her poems Garnier discusses the experiences of the female body. Each of the poems consists of a verbal and pictorial image of a woman in different situ-

<sup>1</sup> Adam Dziadek, *Projekt krytyki somatycznej* [A project of somatic criticism] (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 2014), 20.

<sup>2</sup> In this work I am referring to the second edition of the work (Paris: L'herbe qui tremble, 2010).

ations – resulting from biological conditions, arbitrarily assigned social roles or stereotypes. It is no coincidence that the title of the volume refers to the literary genre, which was popular in 16th century France, and written by men: the *blason*, which tended to objectify women. Garnier attempts a subversive reappropriation of the genre. Like the French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous, she believes that by censoring a woman's body, her breathing, speech and thoughts are censored too<sup>3</sup>. The path to women's liberation leads through the freedom of their bodies.

## The body in the text

Ilse Garnier, like many artists in recent decades, deconstructs and demythologizes the body. This process is directed against a culture which is perceived as repressive and paternalistic<sup>4</sup>. Garnier brings together the female body, dismembered by 15th-century poets of the *blason* (men). With the help of a line she emphasizes individual elements of that body, but this emphasis is never intended to draw attention to the aesthetic qualities of the body. In this way, the poet liberates perspectives on female bodies and thinking about femininity from the fallacy contained in the popular slogan of the 70s: "Our body is ourselves."<sup>5</sup> The utopian character of this otherwise legitimate claim is revealed all the more vividly against the background of the processes of sexualization and objectification of bodies<sup>6</sup>, which was intensifying at that same time. The poet recognizes that the body is a social phenomenon: it does not exist in a vacuum, but on the treadmill of requirements, roles and various limitations. A kind of remedy for patterns which were unrealistic, virtually impossible to reproduce, would be women's writing about what had been carefully hidden: "By regaining their body, appropriated and prostituted by a masculinized culture, women present themselves in ways hitherto absent from art: ugly, old, sick, disfigured by post-surgery scars, humiliated by shameful female ailments. The aesthetic armor, protecting the naked body for centuries, has been crushed."<sup>7</sup> The artists also gained the opportunity to tell stories from their own perspective: both about the benefits and disadvantages of being in the body. Garnier stresses, therefore, that the female body is capable of giving tenderness, of receiving it, of creating a new human being – or, in its freedom, of relishing emptiness. It is the source of music (even if it is unconscious, coming from within the belly), for its resident and for those who love her, it can be the sun and the moon. The poet points out, however, that even the same body in a different situation or in a different context can become a space of oppression (prison, confinement), lack of agency (silencing, control), a source of many grievances, traumas and unhappiness. Garnier is well aware that the experiences she discusses in *Blason du corps féminin* are not separate, individual cases. These are the experiences of many of us (women) every day.

<sup>3</sup> See Hélène Cixous, „Śmiech Meduzy” [„Medusa's laughter”, transl. by Anna Nasiłowska, *Teksty Drugie* 4/5/6 (22/23/24) (1993): 152.

<sup>4</sup> See Maria Poprzęcka, *Akt polski* [The Polish nude] (Warszawa: Edipresse, 2006), 87.

<sup>5</sup> See Lynda Nead, *Akt kobiecy: sztuka, obscena i seksualność* [The female nude: art, obscenity and sexuality], transl. by Ewa Franus (Poznań: Rebis, 1998), 17.

<sup>6</sup> See Poprzęcka, 89–90.

<sup>7</sup> Poprzęcka, 89–90.

Writing about voice, Junzō Kawada noticed: “Although it is a phenomenon which arises in my own body, my voice, as soon as it crosses the threshold of my mouth, becomes a common property that I must share with others.”<sup>8</sup> It is not different with a recovered narrative. The story of a single woman-artist, “uttered” aloud, can become an emanation of multiple confessions, thus connecting women in a community of experiences.

## The logovisual act

In her works Ilse Garnier relies on a female silhouette. The poet never indicates that any of the women she “portrays” is wearing any clothes. One could therefore consider *Blason du corps féminin* to be a collection of female nudes of sorts. But here the question arises: can a drawn-written silhouette, whose shape is far from realistic, be called a nude?

“The nude act includes a certain proposal of a definition of a body and determines specific norms of its watching, therefore assuming a certain concept of a spectator<sup>9</sup>”, as Lynda Nead wrote. For years, the female nude has been subject to strict rigours of the canon. The task of the body was to reflect the harmony and beauty of a universe built “by measure, proportion, and weight”<sup>10</sup>. Famous Renaissance engravings, to name but Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* and Albrecht Dürer’s *The proportions of the human body*, had a significant influence on this tendency. Maria Poprzęcka writes about these authors’ works that “In their reflections, the human body, like the space surrounding it, becomes an intellectual abstraction, a formal construct or a display of anatomical knowledge”<sup>11</sup>. A natural consequence of this approach to art are, for example, numerous images of Venus featuring (canonically) ideal proportions. Reproducing a single model, which has little relation to reality, has real-life consequences for the perception of women’s bodies. When we add to this equation the component of a projected male viewer – the guardian of *the status quo* and the judge, the nude act can become “a means of mastering femininity and female sexuality.”<sup>12</sup> Paradoxically, focusing the male vision on the female body also leads to the opposite tendency, i.e. the now popular pornographization of the women’s image.

Following Kenneth Clark, Poprzęcka states that “the word act [...] evokes the image of a body in balance, certainty, and bloom, one which is fully formed, rather than defenseless and shrunken”<sup>13</sup>. This is a body that Garnier presents in *Blason du corps féminin* – not fragmented, as in Dürer’s paintings or in Marot’s *blasons*, not ‘pornographed’. The poet manages to achieve this effect without clearly indicating body parts. It is worth pointing out, however, that the shapes into which Garnier arranges her lines are not accidental. For example, in tantric Hinduism and in some Buddhist traditions, the circle corresponds to a woman. This symbolism is both sexual and cosmo-

<sup>8</sup> Junzō Kawada, *Głos: studium z etnolingwistyki porównawczej* [The voice: a study of comparative ethnolinguistics], transl. Radosław Nowakowski (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Nead, 15.

<sup>10</sup> See Poprzęcka, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Poprzęcka, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Nead, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Poprzęcka, 11.

logical<sup>14</sup>. In addition, one of the first identifiable rock paintings (as early as between 30 000 and 25 000 BC) depicted primarily oval female shapes<sup>15</sup>. The discontinuous form chosen by Garnier reflects the indeterminacy and multidimensionality of the female body. The poet does not try to force it into frames and canons; on the contrary – she leaves much to the imagination thanks to the use of non-literal linear shapes. For Garnier an important component of women's recovering their body is the change of the projected viewer. From now on it is not to be the object of male desire, but it should be able to exist for itself: strong, whole, in full bloom. The French-speaking poet also touches on more difficult experiences in her volume. But it is only through talking about an imperfect, broken, difficult body that it can be exposed completely: "In modern art the body also seems brutally dragged out of the artistic envelope that has protected it for centuries. Has it lost its beauty, its «perfect form» with which it has been connected for centuries? Such beauty had to be rejected [...] In place of perfection, truth has emerged."<sup>16</sup>

## Eroticism and the sexualization of text

Although in her work Ilse Garnier tries to deny that the nude act is "an image intended to be seen by a man, on which the representation of a woman is so constructed as to become the object of desire,"<sup>17</sup> this intention stands in a relation of tension with the introduction to the volume.

Roland Barthes wrote, "the tongue destroys the body, returns it to the fetish."<sup>18</sup> Pierre Garnier's introduction actually equates Ilse's poetry with her body. For the poet his wife's poems are corporeal, tangible, to the point that he creates an intimate, even sexual relationship with them: "So far special poetry has not yet 'given' love – here it awakens it. I handle these poems like I would a girl; for the first time, my body agrees with writing."<sup>19</sup> Garnier, true to his style, refers to the body by means of numerous metaphors. He skillfully operates the juxtapositions of bright/dark and warm/cold. Ilse's body is likened to a "theatre of light," a "shining horizon,"<sup>20</sup> or a space in which one can "warm oneself in the heat."<sup>21</sup> Heat, however, can also manifest itself in the form of fire, which has a dark side to it. As Garnier writes, "This pure body, through adjectives, experiences its hell, its paradise, remaining pure."<sup>22</sup> Ilse's body has thus a chance to experience various, also negative, circumstances on the pages of the anthology, and thus try to find itself in them, "feel": "[...] the noun *corps*, capturing lines and curves is fulfilled through writing

<sup>14</sup>See Rosemary Sassoon, Albertine Gaur, *Signs, Symbols and Icons: Pre-History to the Computer Age* (Exeter: Intellect Books, 1997), 56.

<sup>15</sup>See André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, transl. by Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 372.

<sup>16</sup>Poprzęcka, 91.

<sup>17</sup>Poprzęcka, 15.

<sup>18</sup>Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, transl. by Richard Miller (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 113.

<sup>19</sup>„Jusqu' alors la poésie spatiale ne donnait pas l'amour – ici elle le suscite. Je me conduis avec ces poèmes comme avec une fille; pour la première fois mon corps fait droit à l'écriture"; Pierre Garnier, „Préface”, in: *Blason du corps féminin* (Paris: Herbe qui tremble, 2010), 13.

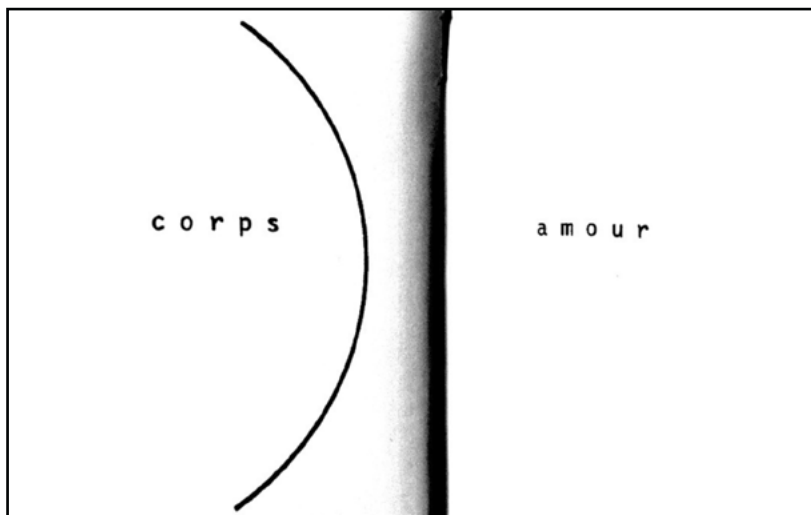
<sup>20</sup>Pierre Garnier, 11.

<sup>21</sup>Pierre Garnier, 13.

<sup>22</sup>„Ce corps pur – à travers les adjectifs – vit son enfer son paradis en restant pur”; Pierre Garnier, 12.

– it becomes Light through torture, fire, pliers. In this word, electrical and light phenomena also occur.”<sup>23</sup> Gradually, Garnier is getting lost in bolder and bolder culture-immersed metaphors. He describes Ilse’s body as the body of Saint Dionysius, an abused body, a virginal body and even Christ’s body ... All these are references to Christian culture. In the introduction to *Blason...*, one can notice a transformation of the biblical theme: the Word “re-creates” the body (“a body dressed in its own name, which invents it”<sup>24</sup>) and, consequently, becomes it. This is how a poetry of the body is created: natural, organic, “simpler than water.”<sup>25</sup> The poet admires its structure, drowns in it unconditionally. For Garnier, Ilse’s text and body merge into one.

The climax, however, occurs in a very literal confession: “I want to make love to a noun.”<sup>26</sup> The noun “body” is perceived by Garnier in an almost synesthetic way, with all senses. You can touch it, you can look at it, you can taste it: “between the flower and the fruit [...] a body-flower that you see, a body-fruit that you eat.”<sup>27</sup> The poet devours the text-body of his wife, which gradually flourishes before his eyes. All this awakens a stronger desire in him and evokes his sexual fantasies: “This body of Ilse, which evolves in a dream from page to page, which flows, which is scattered, meets in its name [...] to make love with a female fetus — only with an egg — a body in fire and smoke [...]” The body smaller and larger from page to page — the smooth point of the universe — oh, if God were desire!<sup>28</sup> On all the pages Garnier’s amorous exaltations are accompanied by the work *corps amour* [‘body love’]. The words “body” and “love” are always written on two separate pages, which, when scanned, look like they are separated by a thick black line. I will try to demonstrate that this crack is not meaningless.



*body love*; Ilse  
Garnier, *Blason du  
corps féminin* (Paris:  
L’herbe qui tremble,  
2010), 20–21

<sup>23</sup> „[...] le nom corps accaparant traits et courbes s’accomplit par les moyens de l’écriture – devant Lumière par la torture, le feu, les tenailles. Dans ce nom se passent aussi les phénomènes électriques et lumineux”; Pierre Garnier, 15.

<sup>24</sup> „corps vêtu de son nom qui l’invente”; Pierre Garnier, 19.

<sup>25</sup> „plus simple que l’eau”; Pierre Garnier, 20.

<sup>26</sup> „J’ai envie de faire l’amour avec un nom”; Pierre Garnier, 13.

<sup>27</sup> „entre fleur et fruit [...] corps-fleur, ce corps qu’on voit, corps-fruit, ce corps qu’on mange”; Pierre Garnier, 19.

<sup>28</sup> „Ce corps d’Ilse qui progresse en rêve de page en page, qui coule, s’éparpille, se réunit dans son nom [...] faire l’amour avec un foetus féminin – avec l’ovule seul – le corps en feu et en fumée [...] Le corps de page en page plus petit et plus grand – point univers lisse – ah, si le désir était Dieu!”; Pierre Garnier, 18.

Pierre Garnier's amorous descriptions correspond to the postulates of *L'érotisme spatialiste* [*Spatial eroticism*], originally published in the journal "Approches" in March 1966 and then reprinted in the collection *Spatialisme et poésie concrète*. This is a short article written jointly by the Garniers. In it the poets point to the physical-kinetic nature of spatial love: "Our eroticism is energy and structures, physical and aesthetic; these are vortices, impulses, particle exchanges, waves, radiation, spatially distributed throughout the body: it is a man and a woman in their gravitational fields."<sup>29</sup> Eroticism in spatial poetry is thus supposed to be based on the mutual exchange of energy between a woman and a man (in their text the poets only consider love in the heterosexual variant). An important element of the erotic influence – as in the whole spatial movement – is the category of motion: "Spatial erotic works are therefore primarily kinetic works; our desire is no longer locked in an unconscious dream, but it is released by means of radiation and motion."<sup>30</sup> The desire for another person can be transformed into energy produced from movement and then transferred onto paper in the form of a poem. Interestingly, in the spatial form of eroticism, the Garniers also see a space for women's emancipation: "The fact that spatial texts have no subject, verb or object means that there is love without the man-master and woman-object, without a myth, without taboo."<sup>31</sup> The poets, therefore, see in a spatial arrangement of words and the abandonment of syntagma a possibility of liberating oneself also from the yoke of patriarchal schemes. The cosmic-energetic romance of particles would be far from the universal idea of love based on "rape and possession."<sup>32</sup> The man is freed from his centuries' old role of a conquistador, and the woman – no longer an object – becomes a subject.

The presence of women's voices is crucial for recovering their own subjectivity. Meanwhile, the introduction to *Blason du corps féminin* was written by the poet's husband, Pierre Garnier. This is nothing unique, as it was a common practice for the spouses to write introductions to each other's works. In the case of this volume, however, this is a surprising choice. After all, in her *Blason...* Ilse Garnier is trying to reverse the harmful tendency encoded in the tradition of the genre, in which it is men who talk about the female body. It is therefore peculiar that the poet allows her husband to re-objectify her body in the *blason* format. This strategy also seems to counter Hélène Cixous' postulate, which hovers over this logovisual volume: "I write like a woman: because a woman should write a woman. And a man should write a man."<sup>33</sup> Garnier's introduction – even though the author is aware of the notorious history of the blason – somehow takes us back to the times before the revolution heralded by feminist critics and the *écriture féminine* trend. Garnier is also aware of the "silence" of the female body<sup>34</sup>. He even seems to applaud Cixous's indirect reference to Ilse: "your body must be heard."<sup>35</sup> The poet forgets, however, that for the female voice to

<sup>29</sup> „Notre érotisme est une énergie et structures, c'est-à-dire physique et esthétique; il est tourbillons, impulsions, échanges particulaires, ondes, radiations, spatialisé dans tout le corps: c'est l'homme et la femme dans leurs champs gravitationnels"; Ilse Garnier, Pierre Garnier, „L'érotisme spatialiste", in: Pierre Garnier, *Spatialisme et poésie concrète* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 180.

<sup>30</sup> „Les œuvres érotiques spatialistes sont donc surtout des œuvres cinétiques; notre désir n'est plus enclos dans le rêve inconscient, mais dégagé il est rayonnement et mouvement"; Garnier and Garnier, 179.

<sup>31</sup> „Le fait que dans les textes spatiaux il n'y ait plus ni sujet ni verbe ni objet signifie un amour sans mâle-maitre ni femelle-objet, sans mythe, sans tabou"; Garnier and Garnier, 179.

<sup>32</sup> See Garnier and Garnier, 180.

<sup>33</sup> Cixous, 149.

<sup>34</sup> See Pierre Garnier, „Préface", 10.

<sup>35</sup> Cixous, 152.

be heard, the male voice must fall silent for a while. In the introduction to *Blason...* the voice of the female body is only mediated through the story of another, as Cixous would write.

Of course, Pierre does not focus solely on the advantages (or worse – the vices) of Ilse's body. Still, having ploughed through a pile of metaphors, we arrive at quite a literal description of the poet's desire. Again, the blason pattern is repeated: a text which purportedly concerns the female body is not interested in the woman at all. This subject matter is just a pretext for a story about men and their desires. The body which is supposed to be regained by women yet again seems to them "strangely foreign [...] as if sick or dead."<sup>36</sup>

It is possible that Ilse Garnier made a conscious decision to have a male voice in her introduction. Perhaps this is her provocation, aimed to illustrate the mechanism of objectifying women in Renaissance *blasons* and the imperceptible pathways through which this tendency permeates modern texts. It is more likely, however, that the poet simply missed the context of the situation and – paradoxically – it is the best illustration of how difficult it is to free oneself from the mechanisms that have been perpetuated over the years. This version is also confirmed by the passage from Garnier's introduction, in which the poet delights in the agency given to his wife's body: "While a woman's body [...] was the object of praise, it is the one that praises now; still life becomes a dazzling nature, the impregnated body becomes an impregnating body, the forbidden body becomes a forbidding body, the abandoned body becomes a light-body."<sup>37</sup> The Frenchman seems unaware of how bizarre these words are in the context of his introduction to the volume. Perhaps sexualizing the text of *Blason du corps féminin* and submitting it to the male gaze was inevitable. Maybe Ilse's body, emerging from her works, was sending unambiguous signals to Pierre, and their effect needed to find its outlet somewhere. There is no escaping from the male-female game and from the roles which it writes for us. As Jakub Jański states, "The text/body oozes with sexuality and eroticism and behaves in a completely different ways when seen with a man's eyes and when it is perceived by a woman, always speaking »only to me« – »me« as a man and »me« as a woman. To me as a man or to me as a woman. In other words, [...] it looks at the reader in a lustful way, inviting them to participate in a sophisticated erotic game of imposing unique meanings."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the fatality of trying to escape from old patterns is doubly manifested. Jański also notes that "the work always reinterprets the existing situation. The work is deeply rooted in tradition, even when it tries to break that tradition."<sup>39</sup> The body, which tried so hard to "write itself", allowed itself to be written again, following the old pattern.

## The corporeality of a printed text

Discussing the relationship between the poet's body and her text, it is impossible to ignore the process of creating the collection *Blason du corps féminin*, which consists of two stages.

<sup>36</sup>Cixous, 152.

<sup>37</sup> „Alors que le corps féminin [...] était l'objet de blasons, c'est lui qui maintenant blasonne; la nature morte devient nature rayonnante, le corps fécondé devient corps fécondant, le corps interdit devient le corps interdisant, le corps abandonné le corps lumière [...]”; Pierre Garnier, „Préface”, 11.

<sup>38</sup>See Natalia Anna Michna, „Iwaszkiewicz – seksualizacja tekstu i tekstualizacja seksu” [“Iwaszkiewicz - sexualisation of text and textualisation of sex”], *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ Nauki Humanistyczne* 6 (1) (2013): 176.

<sup>39</sup>Michna, 179.

The first of them is the hand-drawing of semicircular lines with a black fine liner and a piece of rubber tube, which performs the role of a self-made compass. The second stage is typing the letters on a typewriter. Following Kalina Kupczyńska, I call this form of drawing and text drawing-writing<sup>40</sup>. In order to perform both activities, Garnier must set his body in motion. He needs his muscles for this work – not only those of the hand and forearm, but also of his back – and an efficient eye-hand coordination<sup>41</sup>. It is no coincidence that Tim Ingold compares the writing process to weaving<sup>42</sup>. Instead of fibers, however, Garnier braids the words. In addition, as Kupczyńska notes, the drawing-writing hand marks the individuality of the artist, in a way reflecting her character through the shape and other qualitative features of the line<sup>43</sup>.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the finished volume, which reaches the reader, is not exactly the one created by Ilse Garnier at her Picardy home in Saisseval. This raises the following questions: can a work mediated by print be considered the same as a hand-drawn one? Is a drawn-written, but reprinted text – following Barthes' formula – still “a body”<sup>44</sup>? To what extent can the poet's sketches be treated on a par with prints? In fact, the finished, reprinted work differs from the handwritten records of the author even on the level of appearance. Printing forces the text to comply with the typographic order and to adapt to specific spatial framework in a much more ruthless way than handwriting does. This is due to the mechanics of the printing method, which does not accept changes so easily. The fairly rigid framework of print also increases the readability of the text, focusing it on the recipient. What is more, it could be said that the reprinted work becomes a multi-author text, as it also involves publishers, editors, proofreaders or printers. The printing process thus obliterates the writing body's traces, left on the manuscript, making the reader fenced off from the author like never before<sup>45</sup>.

The work mediated by the print medium is therefore clearly distancing itself from the author's corporeality. As Walter J. Ong points out, „It is interesting how much printing does not tolerate physical incompleteness<sup>46</sup>”; „Print reinforces a sense of closure, a sense that what is in the text is final and has reached the state of completion<sup>47</sup>”. Meanwhile, the drawn-written work is opposed to this attitude: it is in a continuous process, it is constantly becoming. Is it possible to get out of this impasse? Perhaps Ong is right in his pessimism that we cannot „create a text simply from the living experience”<sup>48</sup>. However, my sense is that in the reprinted work there are still particles of the initial energy of the person who created that work. Thanks to that energy *Blason...* can „be in dialog with the world outside its borders”.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>40</sup>See Kalina Kupczyńska, „Ryso-pisanie, linio-wizualność i (formalne) stany krytyczne w komiksie autobiograficznym” [„Drawing-writing, line-visibility and (formal) critical states in an autobiographical comic book”], *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2022): 85.

<sup>41</sup>See Marta Rakoczy, „Materia, ciało, wizualność, czyli jak lepiej zrozumieć pisanie” [„Matter, body, visibility, or how to understand writing better”], *Teksty Drugie* 4 (2015): 24.

<sup>42</sup>Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2016), 80.

<sup>43</sup>See Kupczyńska, 85.

<sup>44</sup>See Kupczyńska, 89.

<sup>45</sup>See Walter J. Ong, *Oralność i piśmienność: słowo poddane technologii* [Orality and literacy: the technologising of the world], transl. by Józef Japola (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2020), 200.

<sup>46</sup>Ong, 200.

<sup>47</sup>Ong, 199.

<sup>48</sup>Ong, 201.

<sup>49</sup>Ong, 200.



Ilse Garnier's *Blason du corps féminin* is based on dualities. First of all, on the most basic level, the works combine verbal and pictorial layers. Lines – following the principle of Peircean iconic similarity – in a way correspond to their verbal counterpart. It is through lexical graphics – thus via an intermediary – the body in this volume becomes more present.

W.J.T. Mitchell, writing about bimediality, stated that „The disciplines of word and image are like two countries where different languages are spoken, but which share a long history of reciprocal migration, cultural exchange and other forms of coexistence”.<sup>50</sup> Duality also occurs in Ilse Garnier's cooperation with Pierre. For a long time the spouses had been creating volumes together, as did Stefan and Franciszka Themerson. Over time, they settled for writing introductions to each other's volumes. In general, their relationship was marked by duality. Apart from the obvious aspect of the interlacing of female and male elements, they were a French-German marriage in times immediately after World War II, when the areas of Ilse's childhood were occupied by France. This certainly required numerous compromises due to cultural differences. Multilingualism became a way to build bridges in the works of the Garniers: not only French and German were used but also Picardic – the dying language of Pierre's small homeland. However, only the line is a universal, cross-cultural form of communication.

This dual kind of art which Ilse Garnier creates is therefore a product of her experiences, which the author subtly puts on paper. Even if she does not recall her own stories, she really does confide in her female readers, telling them about her experiences of living in a female body. But first and foremost, she reveals herself to us, uncovering her delight and anger. On the one hand, she is truly fascinated with women (she was inspired to write the volume by the women she saw during her trip to Senegal<sup>51</sup>), as well as with what their bodies are capable of. On the other hand, she objects strongly against objectifying, taming and stereotyping women. Many fallacies, as Mitchell rightly points out, depend on “silent acceptance of the superiority of words over images”. This is why whenever women – hitherto in the position of the objects of male desire in visual culture – start speaking up, it is perceived as a “transgressive and original” exception.<sup>52</sup> In *Blason du corps féminin* Ilse Garnier rightly tries to show that the drawing-writing woman is not at all an “exception” but, quite on the contrary, the norm. Reclaiming one's own voice, however, is not a unique event but a continuous, slow process. “A woman must herself, with her own effort, enter the text – like in the world and history<sup>53</sup>”. This change is ongoing.

translated by Justyna Rogos-Hebda

<sup>50</sup>William J. Thomas Mitchell, „Słowo i obraz” [“Word and Image”], transl. by Sara Herczyńska, *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2022): 141.

<sup>51</sup>See Ilse Garnier, „Commentaires”, in: *Blason du corps féminin* (Paris: L'Herbe qui tremble, 2010), 74.

<sup>52</sup>See Mitchell, 149.

<sup>53</sup>Cixous, 147.

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# KEYWORDS

## SEXUALIZATION OF TEXT

ILSE GARNIER

**logovisuality**

**ABSTRACT:**

The article analyses a variety of bundles of body and text in the volume *Blason du corps féminin* by the French spatial poet Ilse Garnier, considering social functions of the body presented in her works. Juxtaposing Garnier's output with the theories of Lynda Nead and Maria Poprzęcka, the author outlines the potential of *Blason...* as a collection of logovisual female nudes. The problematic status of Pierre Garnier's introduction to his wife's volume has also been addressed in the context of the postulated reclaiming of the genre for women and sexualization of the text. The article ends with a reflection, inspired by Walter J. Ong, concerning the degree to which a reprinted collection can still be considered a drawn-written and corporeal text.

**female writing**

*female nude*

**CORPOREALITY**

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