THE UNIVERSAL CONTAINED: KAREL TEIGE'S THINKING THROUGH TYPOGRAPHY

(1923-1927)

by

JAIME CIERA HARTMAN

(Under the Direction of Nell Andrew)

ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates the early typographical career of Czech artist, Karel Teige (1900–1951). Focusing on Teige's inseparable writing and design practice between 1924–1927, the book publications *Pantomima* (Pantomime) 1924, and *ABECEDA* (Alphabet) 1926, and the essays "Painting and Poetry" (1923), "Poetism" (1924), and "Modern Typography" (1927), demonstrate decisive turns in his early intellectual and artistic evolution. In fact, the developments from one work or essay to the next shows how his artistic production in graphic design and typography reflects his evolution in thought.

INDEX WORDS:     Art History, Karel Teige, Prague, Central Europe, Book Culture, Interwar Avant-Garde, Typography

THE UNIVERSAL CONTAINED: KAREL TEIGE'S THINKING THROUGH TYPOGRAPHY

(1923-1927)

by

Jaime Ciera Hartman

B.A., Goucher College, 2021

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2023

THE UNIVERSAL CONTAINED: KAREL TEIGE'S THINKING THROUGH TYPOGRAPHY

(1923-1927)


by


Jaime Ciera Hartman




Major Professor:    Nell Andrew

Committee:        Isabelle Wallace
                 Jed Rasula

DEDICATION

To my grandmother, Phyllis, who instilled a love of art in me at a young age. Showing the fascinating world of art and culture and its endless possibilities. Her memory has been a blessing and a driver for my academic endeavors. This thesis is for her.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TEIGE IN HIS CONTEXT

Karel Teige (1900–1951) was the driver of the Czech Avant-Garde scene and the center of its artistic production and international presence.[1] Among his creative output in fine art, poetry, criticism, and design, his most well-known role was as editor and graphic designer for *Revue Devetsil (ReD)*, a thirty-issue avant-garde magazine published in Czech from 1927–1931. *ReD* remains the most discussed magazine publication of the interwar Czech avant-garde. While he may seem a lone figure in the interwar Czech artistic and cultural scene, collaboration was at the core of his work. Teige never stuck to one medium; one sees a multi-disciplinary artistic vision in his editorial and graphic design works. This thesis considers Teige's design involvement in two book publications, *Pantomima* (Pantomime), 1924, and *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), 1926, and his theoretical essays "Painting and Poetry" (1923), "Poetism" (1924), and "Modern Typography" (1927) and argues for their critical role in his early intellectual and artistic evolution. In fact, the developments from one work or essay to the next shows how his artistic production in graphic design and typography reflects the building of his modern typographical identity. Although Teige's importance within the interwar avant-garde of Prague has been well established by scholars such as Megan Forbes, Rea Michalová, and Peter Zusi, there has not been a close examination of his early essays and critical projects between 1923 and 1927 and their role in the construction of his typographical identity.[2] His was a tandem practice of writing and design, first

---

[1] In this thesis, I will follow other scholars in the field of early 20th century Central and Eastern European art by using current national borders when referring to the artist's country of birth and nationality, i.e. Czech rather than Czechoslovakian.

[2] Megan L. Forbes, "In the Middle of It All: Prague, Brno, and The Avant-Garde Networks of Interwar Europe," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016), https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/133350; Rea Michalová, *Karel Teige: Captain of the Avant-Garde*, (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2018); Peter Zusi, "The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism," *Representations* 88, no.1 (2004): 102-124.

writing and publishing his essays and then working on projects where he could test out those ideas through graphic design and then returning again to writing. Both mediums I argue were inseparable in his practice, and Teige accomplished his thought evolution by going back and forth between the two.

By the time Teige was twenty years old, he had experienced WWI as a teenager and was a citizen of the newly formed Czechoslovakia. Like many of his generation living during the first half of the 20th century, he was profoundly affected by the modern world. At a young age, as early as the 1910s, while attending art school he began to question the relevance of painting as a 20th-century art.[3] As he was painting in school, he followed a cubist aesthetic, but he quickly abandoned the traditional practice of painting as outdated and irrelevant. By 1920, Teige was among the founding members of Devĕtsil, a collective of Czech artists, architects, and writers of his generation. The group's 1920 manifesto states, "The answer is that [Devĕtsil members] are well aware that an individual can achieve nothing great on his own, organizationally and artistically. To achieve something requires a group of people united by a new idea."[4] Brought together by a "new idea" achieved through collectivity, the Devĕtsil group sought media that emphasized the proletariat, modern technology and popular culture. This meant leaving behind the traditions of the past for everyday objects and forms that would popularize art for the modern city dweller. The document states, "Our Age has been split into two. Behind us are left the old times, condemned to being turned into dust in libraries; before us, sparkles a new day. It is

---

[3] Rea Michalová, *Karel Teige: Captain of the Avant-Garde*, 100. Michalová reveals from translated letters of Teige's illustrates his thoughts on the division of the arts. By the age of 19, after going through secondary school has already form a group of fellow artists of all kinds. He pushes himself to be his leader of his generation who is moving away from the traditional thinking of artist like Karel Capek.

[4] The Devĕtsil Association of Artists, "Statement," in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, ed. by Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 240.

necessary for everyone."[5] These artists were reacting to the aftermath of WWI and ran towards

the modern world for inspiration. At twenty years old, Teige, like his fellow Devĕtsil members,

began to think how he might contribute to the ideals of populist art in Prague. He pushed himself

through both his writing and collaborations to find a medium worthy of modern life and the

proletariat. He was at an advantage because he was young and did not have ties to the pre-

industrial world having grown up in the modern, industrialized European city of Prague.

Teige's artistic agenda can be seen in his personal endeavor surrounding art and in his

work in translation. While Devĕtsil provided him with a foundation for the collective avant-garde

mindset in Prague during the 1920s, Teige's most considerable influence was French theorist and

art critic Guillaume Apollinaire. He learned French at fourteen to translate works by Apollinaire

into Czech. Apollinaire's 1917 lecture, "L'Esprit nouveau et les poètes" (The New Spirit and the

Poets), published shortly after his death in 1918 would have been of special interest to Teige and

his peers. According to Apollinaire, "Free verse gave wings to lyricism; but it was only one stage

of exploration that can be made in the domain of form."[6] Teige saw in the poet how words might

be freed from their medium constraints and enter into another realm of form beyond sequences

on a typographical grid. Apollinaire also called for a new poetic tempo to reflect the speed of

modern mechanization, arguing that poetry's visual form had not changed in centuries.[7]

The early 20th-century avant-garde destroyed long-established forms of poetry and

created a modern artistic form at the intersection of word and image. The Italian futurists were

already exploring this idea in the form of *parole in libertá* (words-in-freedom), exemplified in

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Guillaume Apollinaire, "L'esprit Nouveau et les Poètes," in *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, trans. Roger Shattuck. (New York: New Directions, 1971), 227.

[7] Ibid, 237. Apollinaire uses the word incunabulum, the period of early printed books from 1451-1501. This can also refer to an early stage of development as well. Apollinaire seems to be getting at the lack of evolution in his mind the way poetry looks and has been formed.

the free-flowing sound and visual poems of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1914 *Zang Tumb Tumb*. Apollinaire recognized this work by the futurists and promoted his own concept of *poèmes simultanés* (simultaneous poems) where images and words are layered.[8] In 1918, he published his groundbreaking collection, *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War 1913–1916*, with poems typeset in a shape related to their content.

---

[8] Malynee M Sternstein, *The Will to Chance: Necessity and Arbitrariness in the Czech avant-garde from Poetism to Surrealism* (Bloomington, IL: Slavica Publishers, 2007), 89.

## "PAINTING AND POETRY" AND *PANTOMIMA*

Like his fellow avant-garde thinkers, Teige questioned the form of modern poetry and its

relationship to image. As a member of Devětsil, he wanted equality among the arts. In the first

issue of *Disk* magazine in May 1923, Teige published the essay "Malířství a poezie" (Painting

and Poetry).[9] *Disk* was an avant-garde, international review magazine edited by Teige, Jaromír

Krejcar and Jaroslav Seifert, and published by the Devětsil collective in Prague. The issue

featured writings by Seifert and other Czech writers and reproduced artworks by artists including

Toyen and Jindřich Štyrský. There were only two issues published, *Disk 1* 1923 and *Disk 2* 1925.

Teige's 1923 essay emphasized that modern painting and poetry will be interchangeable,

with pictures made from both word and image. For Teige, and his artistic output, he aimed to

find a visual medium to begin to see how a universal idea may be achieved on paper. He used

this essay as a foundation for the construction of his typographical identity. While not

recognizing the power of typography yet, Teige realized painting was of the past and the future

required a new art form. In his essay Teige writes:

> The picture is either a poster—that is, public art, like cinema, sports, and tourism, with its
>
> place in the street—or a poem, pure visual poetry, without literature, with its place in the
>
> book, a book of reproductions, like a book of poems […] The traditional framed picture is
>
> being gradually abandoned and is losing its true function.[10]

At twenty-three years old, he saw the future of art as a natural aspect of our daily lives, objects

that can be easily reproduced and transported. The essay does not condemn painting. Instead,

Teige shows concern for the future of the arts if they do not become populist. Teige establishes in

---

[9] This issue of *Disk* also features *ABECEDA*.

[10] Karel Teige, "Painting and Poetry," in Benson and Forgács, *Between Worlds*, 367.

this essay how reproduction will mediate between the viewer and artistic production, the very concern that Walter Benjamin will famously take up in 1935.[11] He also recognized as predecessors both Marinetti and Apollinaire.

Teige's understanding of the power of poetry is founded on the manipulation of form. Modernization and mechanization were why Teige turned towards popularized forms of mass media as a universal form of art. His "Painting and Poetry" essay suggests that while painting had once served a purpose, its usefulness was slowly fading. He ends his essay with, "Now art has stopped being art. Now fields are being born. Poetry is pushing its limits, overflowing, and uniting with multifarious forms of modern life all over the globe."[12] Like Apollinaire, Teige saw poetry as a form to be manipulated by the avant-garde, to create new forms of art. Instead of keeping poetry separate from visual form, it could be combined to birth a modern type. According to Devĕtsil's manifesto "Statement," no artist can achieve a worthy goal without others unified under a singular idea.[13] For Teige's artistic output, this meant finding a medium for collaboration that would encompass various art forms under a singular visual idea for a universal conversation. Teige was purpose-driven to fulfill his ideas in practice and visually work through his set agendas. An important collaborator for Teige was the Czech poet Vítĕzslav Nezval (1900–1958). Nezval, who would work with Teige throughout their careers, grew up outside of Prague in the province of Moravia. Following WWI, he moved to Prague to attend Charles University, where he met Teige and became involved in the Devĕtsil circle. Teige and Nezval were the same age and came together to establish themselves at a young age.

---

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 369.
[13] The Devĕtsil Association of Artists, "Statement," 240.

In 1924, Teige was commissioned as a graphic designer for a collaborative book titled *Pantomima* (Pantomime). The ambitious work involved a collection of poems by Nezval, other work by Czech writers, as well a musical score, a play, an opera and works of art, including two of Teige's own visual poems.[14] Teige had the difficult task of making a book out of all these various forms and accomplished it through his pronounced formatting decisions. The page layouts adhere to a grid structure in which each work has its own place on the page without overlap. The only exception is the cover, designed by the Czech artist Jindřich Štyrský (1899–1942), in which rectangular cutouts of various images abut one another, a precious stone flower brooch, palm trees, a map, a seated clown figure and large sailboat. The cover text is layered on top of those rectangular segments. Front matter includes the title page, the publishing house page, and a page with simply the years 1922–1924, which introduce the viewer to the first section's title page. It's like reading an article on a website in the 21st century, one keeps scrolling or here flipping the pages to continue following the story in sections. The same sequence of section title page, section contents, writings and works of art continues through all twelve sections. The book concludes with an essay by Jindřich Honzl explaining *Pantomima*, followed by a table of contents that lists all included work titles but no individual authors, a blank page and a final publisher's page identifying Teige as the typographical designer. The authorless table of contents is indicative of Teige's belief in collaborative art unified by a singular idea, and it was his role to use typography and page design to join its contributions from one section to the next.

---

[14] English translation for *Pantomim*a is available only for some of the works included, like Nezval's *ABECEDA*. This thesis, however, addresses primarily the book's visual elements and production history rather than its individual content. The source of translations used in this paper will be noted.

In its title, *Pantomima* already evokes a history of performance dating as far back as Ancient Greece, forward through the Comedia dell'Arte to the British Harlequinade. As I've described, each of the book's individual sections are introduced by a title page designed by Teige and the book's visual elements are threaded throughout among the authored texts. For example, the third section titled "Papoušek Na Motocyklu" (Parrot on a Motorcycle) ends on page thirty-four with three black and white photographs of the Fratellini brothers with exaggerated facial expressions placed on a diagonal going from top left corner to bottom right corner. The next section "Depeše na kolečkách" (Dispatch on Wheels) concludes with a reproduction of the 1912 painting, *Hotel de la Marine* by "Marie Laurencinová" (Marie Laurencin).[15] Interwoven among the more standard formatting of traditional poems are striking visual poems like Nezval's "Abeceda," which opens the first section.

A book is a stationary object that a reader sets in motion by flipping the pages. *Pantomima* specifically evokes the performance of a play whose sections correspond to acts and whose literary texts and art works to scenes. The typeface acts as the backdrop and costumes, adding to the composition to future tell the story. Teige used five typeface styles: serif, san serif, script, blackletter, and decorative typefaces. In viewing his various uses of each typeface, Teige did not show a pattern or sequence where a viewer could make connections or assumptions about each section. There are three pairs of title pages with the same font variation, but these pairs do not follow a sequence in the book.[16] The title pages of each section show Teige's attempt to see how playing with the master size and optical size comes across to the viewer within one

---

[15] Marie Laurencin was a French painter and Apollinaire's partner pre-WWI.
[16] Vítězslav Nezval, *Pantomima* (Pantomine), collab. Jindřich Honzl, Jindřich Štyrský, and Karel Teige, (Prague: Central Student Bookshop and Publishing, 1924; fax.,Prague: Akropolis, 2004). Citations and figures refer to Akropolis edition. The pair are section one and six, section two and four and section three and eleven.

collective work. In this experiment, he would figure out what practices no longer served his ideals and understand why they should be abandoned.

*Pantomima*'s literary content begins on page seven with Nezval's "Abeceda" (figure 1). Teige selected modern typeface used in publications of all kinds in the 19th-and early-20th century, a medium stroke with horizontal and vertical serifs of a thinner weight. The poem's title, however, is in Egyptian typeface with more heavily weighted serifs than the main body; Teige used typefaces as a means to separate parts of a work in addition to typical indicators like point size and weight. Each letter for Nezval's alphabet is a bolded, serif modern typeface. If one looks at the legs of the letter A (detail of figure 1), the horizontal serif at the ends of each extends beyond the diagonal lines. Each letter has a play between thick and thin strokes, but enough to distinguish the letters in each word. The alphabet is the foundation of written language and as literacy became widespread over the centuries, the alphabet represents a universal commonality, everyone in any language must learn their ABCs. Differences in beaks, spurs and serifs are like musical notation, Teige reminded the viewer the relationship the alphabet has to sound. Teige seems to be using various fonts to create a harmonious composition on the page.

Each letter differentiates from the other and guides the reader's eye from the title to the subtitles and the poem's stanzas. In the B poem (detail of figure 1), the capital B is rotated ninety degrees on a clockwise axis as though someone kicked it in the back, and the letter fell over. In between the second and third stanza is an additional bolded, B using yet another font; Nezval's poetry leaves space for Teige to play with such a moment. In a way, this recalls the history of books and printing in Europe. Medieval manuscripts such as *The Book of Kells* (c. 800 C.E.) deploy the same manipulation of type size to direct the reader and guide through the work.[17] A

---

[17] The *Book of Kells* is one of the most important medieval manuscripts in that survives and serves as a canonical work in book and print culture.

more direct reference is the inward pointing hands sandwiching the last stanza of the P section, on page ten (figure 2). Referred to as manicule, a long-used practice by scribes and printers alike to point out an important section. While Teige wished to abandon the historical typographical forms, the manicule remains because of its effectiveness to guide the viewer with an easily identifiable universal sign. The stanza reads:

> P
> like a sign at a crossing
> P as in prudence an everday guide
> But sometimes you see such pain and suffering
> ☞   Panhandlers: entry denied  ☜ [18]

The hands indicate where one should direct their eyes—a guided tour of the work of art without needing the artist or an expert.

Following the type systems employed by Teige in *Pantomima*'s section title pages, the following pages exemplify each of those systems: antiqua font, antiqua font with embellishment, grotesk font, grostek font with embellishment. The section titled "Podivuhodný Kouzelník" (The Amazing Wizard) is introduced on page fifty-nine by a grotesk, bold typeface (figure 3).[19] The typeface is minimal and constructivist; the only sense of a decorative element is in the geometric diacritics, in form of accents on the Y in the first word and the I in the second word. With its bolded, clean design, the typeface is highly modern and is easily read. Each typeface indicates a shift in mood or theme from section to section. The "Historie Vojáka" (History of the Soldier) section is introduced in an antiqua typeface with curved, flourished, unicase elements (figure 4). As a more traditional antiqua typeface, its flourished strokes recall the historical tradition of handwritten script of scribes during the Middle Ages in Europe.

---

[18] Vítězslav Nezval, *Pantomima* (Pantomine), 10.
[19] The translations unless otherwise noted are my own translations.

For the section titled, "Srdce hracích hodin" (The Heart of the Musical Clock), on page 123, Teige returns to a grotesk, 3-D, bold, geometric typeface which was used in the third section (figure 5).[20] The design pops off the page and extends into the space of the reader breaks the fourth wall so that the text becomes a part of the reader's environment. Its shadowed, bolded gray, inlined type evokes a skyscraper or cityscape. A viewer gets a more industrial, feel from this typeface. Polana Bregantová has described *Pantomima* as "a pasted-together family album of Devětsil [rather] than a conventional book."[21] Teige was showing a variety of fonts to his viewers, both taking them on a visual journey from one composition to the next, but also creating a visual cacophony of typefaces. It is as if he hoped that in throwing into one work various type families, he might see what typefaces adhere to his modernist visual sensibilities.

In another example of the book's interior text design, on page eighty-nine Teige returns to an older, gothic-like typeface similar to modern embellished German typeface Fraktur, which recalls the handwritten style used in medieval manuscripts called Carolingian minuscule or Blackletter Gothic (figure 6). For "Na Cestu" (On the Journey), the s is hard to decipher due to its extended spine and ligature that resembles more an f than an s. Teige did not use this typeface again in any of his other typographic works, due to its historical references and lack of readability. This is an example of him experimenting and working towards a new theory using *Pantomima* as a space for visual problem solving. Later in "Modern Typography" Teige explained why he no longer used older typefaces like the one seen on page eighty-nine because of its historical lineage and lack of readability. Teige attempted to see what typefaces were visually universal, testing whether multiple typefaces could be in conversation with each other or

---

[20] Malynne M. Sternstein, *Will to Chance*, 73. Translation of Srdce Hracích Hodin.

[21] Polana Bregantova, "Typography," in *Karel Teige (1900-1951): L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde,* ed. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha. trans. David Chirico, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 78.

disjoint the whole. Teige learned from his work on *Pantomima* that typography is a visual

connector to balance multiple forms on a page and within a book, leaving him to contemplate

how compositional connection can be achieved with typographical elements.

Teige's first picture poem features on page 127, at the bottom of Nezval's poem "Srdce

hracích hodin" (The Heart of the Musical Clock) (figure 7). The words of Teige's poem, "What is

the most beautiful in the café?" fuse with the shapes and create a cohesive, inseparable image by

using rectangles, squares, and triangles. The contrast between light and dark brings certain letters

forward while others hide in the background. The parallel and horizontal lines create visual

intrigue while using scale to warp certain words. The eye moves from word to word. The viewer

first reads the question (What is the most beautiful in the café?) and then reads the answer (The

red and white flowers on the porch). However, there is nothing in the composition that alludes to

the content. Unlike Apollinaire's calligrammes, Teige's picture poem does not use the poem to

inform his composition. Instead, Teige frees the word's form from its dependence on the content

and uses typeface to create a universal conversation between the two.

The final poem on page 137 in *Pantomima*, "Adé" (Adieu), is another picture poem, this

time a collaboration between Nezval and Teige (figure 8).[22] Malynne Sternstein has suggested

that "Adé" is an obituary, a farewell to *Pantomima* and to old forms of literature.[23] While one can

read this poem line by line and analyze its possible meaning, it does not serve here. If this is

supposed to be a farewell to past literature, the layering of the cross and the quill allude to the

---

[22] "Adieu. The birds are flying away/They keep on/ Playing their games / Lace of ocean sun and poetry / Captain of many romances/ The harlequin and his muse have fainted / in their dances/ Adieu/ The birds are flying away / They keep on / playing their games / The wagon with its comedians has left / pantomime without end / It seems we are the last who were / made to suffer thus / The birds are flying away / They keep on / playing their games / as if I was saying / to what? Adieu." Karel Srp, "Karel Teige in the Twenties," in Eric Dluhosch, *Karel Teige: L'enfant terrible of the avant garde*, 41.
[23] Malynne M. Sternstein, *Will to Chance,* 73.

original instrument of a scribe. The word *Adé* both begins and ends the poem but is also used to divide the first half of the poem from the second half. As in previous examples from *Pantomima*, Teige uses typeface size to separate parts of the poem and to create movement and direction in the composition. Then the repetition of the word *Adé*, translating to goodbye, reminds the reader that this is the last page of the book. Just like leaving a party some guests say goodbye and then proceed to talk more and repeat this cycle a few times until they walk out of the door. As the reader gets to the last *Adé* and flips, the following blank pages act as a bow before the back cover closes the curtain. *Pantomima* is a collective work of art with many literary genres. Teige's typographical agenda is a response to those various genres.[24]

---

[24] Rea Michalova, *Karel Teige: Captain of the Avant-Garde,* 159.

<center>"POETISM" AND *ABECEDA*</center>

On the heels of *Pantomima*, Teige wrote his 1924 essay "Poetismus" (Poetism).[25] Poetism was a

literary and artistic movement emerged from Prague. Teige and Nezval were leaders in this art

form, a branch of Devětsil. Esther Levinger calls Poetism the dialectical counterpart to

Constructivism even though she does not see it having influence outside of the Czech art scene.

While written about numerous times by Teige in magazines of the time in Prague, few works of

art beyond *ABECEDA* articulate Poetism with visual in addition to written form. The

contemporary understanding of the movement is confined to works that remain from the small

circle of Poetists as the movement was not widely followed or copied; it lasted from about 1924

and dissolved in the 1930s, leaving behind an array of poems and books which would be left

untranslated for decades.[26]

     Both heralded and developed by Teige and Nezval, Poetism was about accepting new art

forms that did not carry the same historical baggage of the past, as painting, sculpture, and

architecture. Instead, they sought an "art of life." Teige writes:

> Poetism, is an art of life, an art of living and enjoying, it must become, eventually, a
>
> natural part of everyday life, as delightful and accessible as sport, love, wine, and all
>
> manner of other delectations. It cannot be a profession; rather, it will become a universal
>
> need. No individual life, that is, a life lived morally, with smiles, happiness,
>
> love, and dignity, will be able to do without it. The notion of a professional artist is

---

[25] This essay was first published in *Host* vol. 3, no, 9-10 (July 1924), which was an avant-garde magazine published in Prague and Teige was one of its editors. It is to be noted essays and other small works of literature like Nezval's poetry were published in these avant-garde magazines rather than stand-alone works. This practice was common among the Czech avant-garde circles.

[26] *Pantomima*, *On the Waves of TSF*, and *ABECEDA* were all reprinted in the first decade of the 21st century by Czech publishing houses. Pantomima was not translated when reprinted.

an error and today, to some extent, an anomaly. The Paris Olympics of 1924 did not admit any professional sports clubs. Why should we not reject just as resolutely the professional guilds of painting, writing, modeling, and chiseling businessmen? An artwork is not a commodity for commercial speculation, and it cannot be the subject of stilted academic debates. It is essentially a gift, a game with no constraints and no consequences.[27]

Two ideas key to Poetism emerge in the excerpt. First, art is part of a functional modern, technological society. It is essential to living a good life and should not continue to be a "commodity" for the wealthy and elite. If art is essential to a productive, modern life, then art must be diversified. Second, Teige was trying to emphasize the breadth of art forms. Without art, people only get half of what they need in life. Mankind has art and should use it to its fullest potential and challenge the definition of fine art and its accepted forms.

Poetism was about a return to everyday aesthetics where no specific genre, style, or restrictions exist in art, just like in the Devětsil manifesto. Teige writes that, "The poetic picture is the picture of book illustration, photography, and photomontage."[28] In *Pantomima* Teige, Nezval and others in their circle played around with the "poetic picture," using text as image and image as text. At the same time, Teige stated, "Poetism is not literature."[29] By exploring forms that more traditional modes like painting and poetry could not express, Poetism emphasizes the poetics of life. There is no exact form Teige referred to as the perfect form, but visual poems, poetic puzzles, and lyrical films are some examples of Poetism.

In *Pantomima*, Teige used a variety of typefaces and saw the visual excitement of picture poems, but Poetism called for a system of signs that "inspire the modern mind."[30] *Pantomima*'s

---

[27] Karel Teige,"Poetism," in Benson and Forgács, *Between Worlds*, 579.
[28] Ibid, 581.
[29] Ibid, 580.
[30] Ibid, 581.

lack of cohesion in typographic design left Teige to think about what font is best for a modern publication. Poetism emphasizes the integral part art plays in creating a happy, modern life. Teige continued his journey to find an ideal visual agenda. The visual fusion of word and image was vital to him as he discovered in works like *Pantomima*. The graphic designer's role is to oversee a work's readability through page design and typographical choices. He believed art must make the viewer happy and entertain as a film or performance.

    *Pantomima* seems to have been the visual ignitor for Teige to publish "Poetism," in which he grappled with how to create a more cohesive visual narrative. If *Pantomima* showed multiple art forms, it did not achieve to combine them into one composition. In 1925, he made a first attempt at a Poetist book, a collaborative compilation of poems by Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986) with typographical and graphic design by Teige, titled, *Na vlnách TSF* (On the Waves of TSF). Teige's next project was grander in scale, a book built around Nezval's *ABECEDA* poems.

    *ABECEDA* was a collaborative project that resulted in a 1926 book publication. Comprised of three separate but vital iterations, the work combines text written by Vítězslav Nezval in 1922 (figures 9 and 10), a live performance performed by Milča Mayerová in April of 1926 and in its final product, a book with photographs of Mayerová alongside Nezval's Poems with Teige's typography and page design in December 1926.[31] The poems represent one vision, but Poetism states that while individuality is great, the collective nature of mankind can create more together.[32] Tanya Silverman even goes as far as to say it is Teige's *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[33] Her

---

[31] When *ABECEDA* was published, Wassily Kandinsky produced a series of dance line drawing for his essay "Dance Curves" featuring Gret Palucca. These drawings do not have the same ability to create a performance as Abeceda. Yes, there is the presence of movement, but only through the removal of the body in the lines. While there is a side-by-side comparison of the photographs and Kandinsky's line drawings, there is more of an emphasis on the rhythm and lyrical form of lines than an association between the moving body and geometric forms.

[32] Ibid, 582.

[33] Tanya Silverman, "The Persistence of Poetry in Karel Teige's Outlook." *Slovo a Smysl – Word & Sense* 18, no. 36 (2021): 69, https://doi.org/10.14712/23366680.2021.1.3.

statement shows how this work embodies a total vision of art. Considered the most famous Czech Avant-Garde book of interwar Prague, according to Rea Michalova, *ABECEDA* is discussed more by scholars in English than any other contemporaneous book.[34] While the collective vision coming together to make a singular work makes this work stand out as the marker of Czech Avant-Gardism in the early 20th century, scholars have largely examined *ABECEDA* for its page design and typography instead of examining the total work. Every time Teige worked on a new project he saw new potential for typography through its limitations. *ABECEDA* has both a unified typeface and continual presence of the human body. The body and the physical nature of dance grounded the work back into the individual, no longer dividing the realm of art with the realm of the body.

It seems from scholarship that Nezval and Teige would be the drivers for the creation of the book form of *ABECEDA*, but Mayerová initiated the project. Matthew Witkvosky explained how she wanted to create an advertisement for her dance language and school after her first performance of *ABECEDA*.[35] The inaccurate narrative of Teige and Nezval as the creative drivers for the work has pushed Mayerová to the periphery when in fact her body and form are at the center of the work. Without Mayerová and her Laban training, the visual agenda and geometric nature of *ABECEDA* would not be present. Following the ideas presented in Poetism, Teige would focus in on Poetist theatrical values and a refined, united, and modernist typographic composition. Nezval's poetry reaches new potential through the collaboration among several

---

[34] Rea Michalova, *Karel Teige: Captain of the Avant-Garde*, 236.

[35] Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Stage Language: Milča Mayerová and the Czech Book 'Alphabet'," *The Art Bulletin* 86, no.1 (2004): 130. Mayerová studied with Rudolf Von Laban in the early 1920s before returning permanently to Prague in 1925. She took her training and her understanding of Laban notion to create a modern dance school in Prague.

types of artmakers. Each use something different to create a greater whole: the word, the photographic image, the body, and the typeface.

Each page in *ABECEDA* follows the same visual structure. When held by the bind, the verso page contains in bolded typeface, the letter in the upper left-hand corner and the four-line poem, only two visual elements per page. On the recto side of the opposite page is "typofoto," the combination between a photograph and a typographic form.[36] Except for the cover page with its beige and muted burgundy tones, the rest of the book is black and white. Mayerová wears a two-piece set, a black fitted tank top with a square neckline, a white strip down each side of the shirt, and a pair of black shorts that continue the vertical white line down the side. She also wears a pair of black leather pedinis and a black swimming cap with a white stripe going from one ear to another.[37] A line follows both sides of her body from her head down to the bottom of her shorts. Her costume resembles, the bathing costume worn by women in the 1920s. However, there is this same simplicity of form and line—the contrast between light and dark, black and white.

While the poems are separated from Mayerová's dance compositions, Nezval sets up this total work in its preface, explaining, "Alphabet is the image, in book form, of a meeting of autonomous arts solving a common task in parallel and within the bounds of their functions."[38] The simple cover design of intersecting lines of various line weights both welcomes and tricks the viewer (figure 11). There is no visual indication of what lies inside the book. Nezval's use of the word "parallel" rather than combination complicates how he understood collaboration to

---

[36] Karel Teige, "Moderni Typo (1927)," Teige credits Bauhaus' László Moholy-Nagy with the term.
[37] Pedinis are a jazz shoe worn by dancers with two cutouts near the middle of the foot to emphasize the arch and have a small 1-inch heel made out of a foam like material. This is also a shoe that can be worn by ballet teachers and masters as a distinction of status between teacher and student.
[38] Vítězslav Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), 10.

work. Nezval emphasizes how this book operates, not as a new art form but as a space to allow several independent forms to work together. Like Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the century before, which stated the need to unify the arts and for them to assist each other for a greater whole, Nezval and his collaborators, Mayerová and Teige, see each medium's limits as a way to collaborate to create a more total work. Irina M. Denischenko asserts that Czech form of image poetry differentiated itself because of their use of the "photographic image"; fusing the word and photographic image into a new form where each medium complements each other rather than allowing one to overshadow the other.[39] Each form contributes to the whole; while words cannot shape or mold themselves as the human body can in dance, together they create an expanded understanding.

Originally Abeceda was a collection of stand-alone letter poems written by Nezval, and he was not concerned with directly relating each poem to its letter. Instead, as illustrated by Esther Levinger, "…the Poetist exploited the typographic form of the letter in free associations and created the paradigm of the letter as a visual sign."[40] Using the letter as the grounding presence for creative inspiration allowed the free-flowing association of what the letter said to Nezval. Take, for example, the poem for the letter M (figure 12):

M
you're palm reader's bright star
Success and love cross here and meet
Two mighty lines life and heart
at death they'll close your hand in sleep [41]

---

[39] Irina Denischenko, "Photopoetry: Czech Poetism and the Photographic Image," in *Beyond Given Knowledge: Investigation, Quest and Exploration in Modernism and the Avant-Gardes,* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 96. Irina Deninschenko notes in footnote 4 that "I use use 'photographic image' to refer to whole photographs, photo-postcards, as well as to the photographic cutouts that were montage into image poems." Here I am directly referring to the photographs of Mayerová layered onto the typographical compositions by Teige.
[40] Esther Levinger, *Constructivism in Central Europe: Painting, Poetry and Photomontage*, (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 92-93.
[41] Vítězslav Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), 36. Figures mentioned and shown in List of Figures for *ABECEDA* refer to J. Otto edition.

The poem has no direct reference to the letter M. One would think Nezval would emphasize the crotches of the uppercase M likening it to peaks and valleys and how it reflects a mountain range. Instead, the reader is led to think about a palm reading and the lines of the hand. This visual association reaches its peak in the book. Teige used the poem to create an association between Nezval's words and the typofoto he designs. Unlike other pages which Mayerová body reflects the letter, here the combination of an outside image with the body and typeface enhanced the viewers' understanding of Nezval's words. To the right of the M poem, on the bottom left of page thirty-one is a photograph of an outstretched hand with its palm facing the viewer (figure 12).[42] Teige used a black substance to mark and emphasize an M shape in the lines of the hand relating to the third line of the poem. While on Mayerová may be playing off the idea of hands by crossing hers at the wrist, likewise creating an M-like shape. Mayerová's legs are spread apart, and she stands on top of the hand in the middle of the page, looking up at the M above her, whose left leg extends beyond the baseline to connect with Mayerová on the page.

Teige created his typofotos using three different compositional connections between the letter and photograph. First, for A, D, E, I, L, N, T, and X the connection was made by layering the photograph on top of the letter and breaking apart the letterform. Teige split the letter at the apex of the uppercase A and inserted the A form of the body on the left side of the letter to fuse the two (figure 13). With the letters E and T, Teige used Mayerová's body to complete the composition. On page fifteen, the dancer faces away from the page with face in profile and lifts her left arm over her head, breaking at the elbow to form a right angle, and pushes her fingers tight against each other (figure 14). The upper part of her right arm presses against the side of her

---

[42] There are two other pages that are unique in ABECEDA, R (44-45) where the R in the top righthand R is repeated 5 times shrinking in size each time and JQ (30-31) these letters are shown together and do not have their own separate poems and typofotos. Citation references

torso, obscuring the forearm but revealing the backside of her right hand making the same shape as her left. The right leg of Mayerová is lifted parallel to the bottom of the page. Alone, the photograph shows the form of the letter, Teige could have connected the letter form without breaking it up by shrinking the size of the photography, but instead he uses Mayerová's extended right leg to replace the middle bar of the E. He pushed it further by placing her left foot on the foot of the letter.

Second, on the F, H, M, and Z pages use the same connection style to create the typofoto, in which the leg of the letter makes a seamless side by side connection to the photograph of Mayerová. The balance of space can be seen well with the letter H typofoto on page twenty-one (figure 15). Mayerová's body's larger form is complemented by the equal width of the letter's legs and the same line weight in the bar of the H. The right ascending leg of the uppercase H extends beyond Mayerová's height as if to balance her precariously lifted right foot. Teige created a visual association between the two and reinserted the grid in these compositions.

The third style is used in the page spreads for B, C, G, JQ, K, O, P, R, S, U, V, W, and Y pages. Here Teige created the letter forms using negative space of geometric black shapes and lines he included in the overall composition. On page fifty-three, the letterform of the Y looks as though Teige took a sharp blade and cut out the Y shape within the black rectangle (figure 16). Mayerová seems to emulate this use of negative and positive space in her dance composition. Her head thrown back with the top parallel to the right side of the page in profile as she leans back breaking at her waist and She is kneeling with her right knee and shin placed behind her and her left thigh extend straight as the bottom half pulls into the body with her foot beveled. The form of her legs mirror the slants of the letter with the top half of her body acting as the neck of the letter. She becomes the letter by forming it upside down on a rotated axis. This photo

completely alters the viewers presumed idea of how the body can form the letter Y, usually by standing up straight, putting your legs together, lifting your arms above your head, and making a 45-degree angle between the base of your head and the shoulders. Teige did this to clearly display the letter while also giving visual space for Mayerová dance compositions without muddying the two by layering. Teige employed these three styles of connection to emphasize the simplistic and modern qualities in the typefaces he chose for *ABECEDA.*

Tanya Silverman argues Teige's fascination with language systems explains his typographical agenda in the 1920s.[43] *ABECEDA* uses the standard Latin alphabet, without Czech diacritics, so as to reach a universal visual form through more common letters and font.[44] The universality of its design was more critical to Teige than the content of the Czech poetry. Of course, the poems remain in Czech, but the typofotos and compositions mitigate the language barrier. Nezval and Teige play with how the elemental form of language, letters, can become new.

The limitation of one form needs the combination of multiple art forms; collaboration helps *ABECEDA* to be read like a performance. Like in live dance, multiple elements must work together and morph for the work to function fully. To exemplify its multifaceted vision, the book combines several contradictory art forms: the written form, the photographic, the moving form, and the typographical. A book itself lies outside our usual understanding of performance and space. Performances are live, and there is a performer and a spectator. The performer in *ABECEDA* is still Mayerová with the addition of Nezval and Teige, and the audience is the reader. Almost everything is present in the book version of *ABECEDA* except for sound. The

---

[43] Tanya Silverman, "The Persistence of Poetry in Karel Teige's Outlook," 65.
[44] Rea Michalova, *Karel Teige: The Captain of the Avant*-Garde, 263. Rea Michalova explains how Teige used an antiqua typeface. From my further investigation it seems to be the typeface created in 1925 by Slavoboj Tusar, a serif typeface, which is now referred to as Tusar or Tusar Antiqua.

association of letters with noise, however, makes up for the lack of sounds. Again, it goes back to the importance of using an alphabet. All languages form from two things: letters and sounds. Humans learn to communicate through sounds, and by associating a letter with a sound, we learn to read. Children hear letters before they see and can read them. This fundamental human experience and understanding of the relationship between the alphabet and sound adds sound to the book.

Mayerová's desire to continue advertising her dance school and her own vocabulary, which directly comes from her Laban training and his dance notation, supports this idea of the book as performance. Instead of a large audience, it is an audience of one who gets to view the performance at their own pace. The viewer can remain on one page for as little or as long as they want, and this is an aspect of duration. A performance requires time, and reading a book also requires a time investment. As the viewer flips through the book like a flipbook, Mayerová poses start to move in the manner of Muybridge's photographs of a horse. It is motion capture.

A performance requires collaboration between performers, sound, lighting, stage crew, and other background figures. For Teige, collaboration is the core of making Poetism a functional visual agenda, and *ABECEDA* as a book only works because of its collaboration. Without one, the others do not reach their fullest visual potential. The simplicity of design in *ABECEDA* gives it the illusion of space. The poem and the typofotos take up space, but not a three dimensional one. There is a fixed space where the dancer and the words are restricted. Similar to a dancer on a stage. The performance is hidden from the audience if one goes beyond the page or the stage.

*ABECEDA*, in its fifty-five pages, creates a contained performance. A performance that readers can return to and take with them anywhere they please and share with whomever. The

work reads as a performance because of the collaboration and combining multiple art forms. The drive of Mayerová, the artistic agenda of Teige, and the source material of Nezval create the perfect space for this work to exist. However, for Teige, it is also a space for theoretical play and imagination, trying to understand how he can achieve a universal vision of art that does not require the use of language.

"MODERN TYPOGRAPHY" AND THEORETICAL EVOLUTION THROUGH DESIGN

In 1927, Teige published "Moderní Typo" in the journal *Typografia*.[45] The essay was Teige's

most definitive space for thinking about a universal art form for the modern, postwar world.

*ABECEDA* had allowed him to think about what is truly at the core of picture poems: unified

typeface. The streamlined, cohesive type in *ABECEDA* is a visual evolution from his

typographical agenda in *Pantomima*, where the typeface was reminiscent of the past, and which

he then condemned in "Poetism." He came to a crossing in thought about the future of universal

art forms. The more he played with graphic design, precisely typeface, the more he realized it

was the ideal form. This essay, one of Teige's most widely known, laid out the case for modern

typography.[46]

The essay begins by laying out why William Morris, the turn-of-the-century master of

typeface, should no longer be followed. Summing up his reasons, Teige argued Morris's forms

were archaic, too focused on beauty, returning to middle-age aesthetics, bad typography, and too

much embellishment. Teige states:

Today from a chaotic variety of types, we select those that are perfectly constructed.

During wartime requisitioning of metal, printers gave up their stocks of the most

---

[45] Megan L. Forbes, "In the Middle," 270. Meghan Forbes points out in footnote 539, that "the same volume (from 1927) in which Teige's 'Moderní Typo" essay appears (in Czech and German) also features Herbert Bayer's (1900--1985) "Attempt at a New Script" ("Versuch einer neuen Schrift," appearing in Czech as "Pokus o nové písmo"), Moholy-Nagy's "Contemporary Typography" ("Zeitgemäße Typographie," appearing in Czech as "Časová typografie") and Jan Tschichold's "New Creation" ("elementare typographie," appearing in Czech translation as "Nová tvorba")." In her dissertation on the networks of the Czech Avant-Garde, Forbes emphasizes the conversation Teige was having outside of the Czech context. While here, it is not the aim to place him into the wider avant-garde theorical circles, it is important to note how relevant his thinking was to others across the continent.

[46] In context of Teige's writings, only about a dozen or so of his essays are translated into English despite growing amount of scholarship with the past two decades. Out of all his essays, "Poetism," "Modern Typography," and "Minimum Dwelling" are the best known due to their appearance in *Karel Teige (1900-1951): L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde* edited by Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, 1999.

beautiful old but worn types and kept their questionable treasures, the fashionable, far

from beautiful, mostly German-manufactured types. Yet modern typography requires

beautiful, austere, simple, lapidary, and well-balanced types of geometric construction,

free of any superfluous appendages, hooks, and curlicues.[47]

In his previous essay on Poetism, he was looking to abandon the old typefaces for ones that

follow his list of requirements. In "Modern Typography," Teige was clarifying what defines well

-constructed, beautiful typography.

As part of this modern, technological world, he also saw the need for typefaces to evolve.

Hence, he condemned Morris for going backward rather than to a more straightforward and

cleaner future. Typefaces must suit the text and create a relationship between the word and the

type. He states:

…advertising has created a perfect combination of typography and photography,

producing what Moholy-Nagy calls typofoto. Typo: communication by means of the

printed word. Foto: communication by means of the image of what is visually

comprehensible. Typofoto: visually most exact and complete communication.[48]

By using the typofoto method in *ABECEDA*, borrowing from Moholy-Nagy, he realized the ideal

way of communicating the printed word and image. By working with Nezval and Mayerová,

Teige saw in action the effectiveness of typofoto and realized, like others at the time, the power

of typography for visual communication. While language and literacy are required to read the

words on a page, the streamlined typography allows the entire composition to communicate like

---

[47] Karel Teige, "Modern Typography (1927)," 97.
[48] Ibid, 99.

a painting. Teige credited advertising and industrial design with putting in motion the idea that the typeface must fit the function of the work.[49]

In his essay of 1927, Teige calls for a modern international language system with an "accepted letter format," which removes itself from the standard alphabet.[50] This may explain why Nezval used standard Latin instead of the particular Czech alphabet, for visual translation purposes, and with Teige's influence, as the foundational text for promoting an "accepted letter format." *ABECEDA* combines this accepted letter format and the typofoto in one book, making it ideal for modern artistic communication. He acknowledges:

> In the design of Nezval's *Pantomima* (Pantomime) of 1924 and Seifert's collection of poems *Na vinách TSF* (On the Waves of the Telegraph) of 1925, it was important for the typography to complete the poetic process and transpose the poems into the visual sphere. In Nezval's *Abeceda* (The Alphabet), a cycle of poems based on the shapes of letters, I tried to create a "typofoto" of a purely abstract and poetic nature, setting into graphic poetry what Nezval set into verbal poetry in his verse, both being poems evoking the magic signs of the alphabet.[51]

Above, Teige shows that *Pantomima* and *ABECEDA* were meaningful collaborations for him to work on because they helped him figure out how to take poems and make them into visual forms by playing with typographical styles. Teige corroborates here that these works were precursors to putting his visual thoughts into words. As someone who embodied the lifestyle of "ars una," he was constantly working out his thoughts as a trained artist, but also needed to create the visual form of his theories in order to write them down with words.

---

[49] Ibid, 100.
[50] Ibid, 103.
[51] Ibid, 105.

With *Pantomima* and *ABECEDA* as his prime examples, Teige concludes "Modern Typography" by emphasizing the need for avant-garde book design in the search for universal vision. He came to realize the imperative of graphic design from his evolution in theory through his artistic output over four years, going from poetry as the new painting to realizing how the typeface affects the words and compositions on page. Teige came to these realizations through trial and error using an artistic version of the scientific method. His emphasis on collaboration or simultaneous visions became one universal vision under his graphic guidance. The young Teige absorbed the idea of his idols and fellow avant-garde thinkers to create his own *Gesampkunstwerk* by the age of twenty-six. Design brought out the best qualities of each medium. For the rest of his life, after creating his typographical and professional foundation, he would continue to think about typography solidifying his professional drive to be a modernist typographer within the grand drama of the early-20th-century avant-garde. *ABECEDA* and *Pantomima* are Teige's works of art not because of how he chose to compose them. These pages are performances of his theoretical essays, animating them through typography and unifying author, artist, choreographer, or composer under his direction and vision. Rather than static objects of art, each book is a living experiment that takes part in the theoretical journey Teige took in those four years—a mixture of theory and play.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apollinaire, Guillaume. "L'esprit Nouveau et les Poètes" in *Selected Writings of Guillaume Apollinaire*, 227-237. Translated by Roger Shattuck. New York: New Directions, 1917.

Brand, Heather, ed. *New Formations: Czech Avant-Garde and Modern Glass from the Roy and Mary Cullen Collection*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organized by and presented at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, November 6, 2011-February 5, 2001.

Bringhurst, Robert. *The Elements of Typographic Style*. Vancouver: Hartley and Marks Publishers, 2013.

Denischenko, Irina. "Photopoetry: Czech Poetism and the Photographic Image." In *Beyond Given Knowledge: Investigation, Quest and Exploration in Modernism and the Avant-Gardes,* 95–114. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2018.

The Devĕtsil Association of Artists. "Statement." In *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, Edited by Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 240-41. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Dluhosch, Eric, and Rostislav Švácha, ed. *Karel Teige (1900-1951): L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Filipová, Marta. *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Forbes, Megan L. "In the Middle of It All: Prague, Brno, and The Avant-Garde Networks of Interwar Europe." PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016. https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/133350.

Fraser, James Howard, ed. *The Czech Avant-garde and Czech Book Design: the 1920s and 1930s.* Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1995.

Garfinkle, Deborah. "Karel Čapek's 'Pásmo' and the Construction of Literary Modernity through the Art of Translation." *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47, no.3 (2003): 345-366. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3219977.

Kiebuzinski, Ksenya. *Maximum Imaginativeness: An Exhibition on Modern Czech Book Design (1900-1950) from the Collection of the Thomas Rare Book Library.* Edited by P.J. Carefoote and Philip Oldfield. Toronto: Coach House Press, 2015.

Levinger, Esther. *Constructivism in Central Europe: Painting, Poetry and Photomontage*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.

Ort, Thomas. *Art and Life in Modernist Prague: Karel Čapek and his Generation, 1911-1938*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Michalová, Rea. *Karel Teige: Captain of the Avant-Garde*. New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2018.

Nezval, Vítězslav. *ABECEDA* (Alphabet). In collaboration with Milča Mayerová and Karel Teige. Prague: J.Otto, 1926. Reprinted with translations by Jindřich Toman and Matthew S. Witkovsky. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 2001. Page references are to the 2001 edition.
———. *Pantomima* (Pantomine). In collaboration with by Jindřich Honzl, Jindřich Štyrský, and Karel Teige. Prague: Central Student Bookshop and Publishing, 1924. Fascimile of the first edition. Prague: Akropolis, 2004.

Pomajzlová, Alena, ed. *Devětsil: 1920-131.* Translated by Gwendolyn Albert and Vladimira Šefranka Žáková. Prague: Prague City Gallery, 2019. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organized by and present at Stone Bell House, December 11, 2019-March 29, 2020.

Sayer, Derek and Dariusz Gafijczuk, ed. *The Inhabited Ruins of Central Europe: Re-imagining Space, History and Memory.* New York: Palgrave, 2013.

Silverman, Tanya. "The Persistence of Poetry in Karel Teige's Outlook." *Slovo a Smysl – Word & Sense* 18, no. 36 (2021): 64-78. https://doi.org/10.14712/23366680.2021.1.3.

Sternstein, Malynne M. *The Will to Chance: Necessity and Arbitrariness in the Czech avant-garde from Poetism to Surrealism.* Bloomington, IL: Slavica Publishers, 2007.

Taylor, John. "Prague as a Poem: Vítězslav Nezval and Emil Hakl." *The Antioch Review* 68, no.2 (2010): 374-381. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40607361.

Teige, Karel. "Moderni Typo (1927)" Translated by Alexandra Bücher. Reprinted in *New Formations: Czech Avant-Garde and Modern Glass from the Roy and Mary Cullen Collection*, 76-87. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011. First published in *Karel Teige (1900-1951): L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, 1999.
———. "Painting and Poetry." In *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, Edited by Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 367-369. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
———. "Poetism." In *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910-1930*, Edited by Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, 579-582. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Thomas, Alfred. *Prague Palimpsest: Writing, Memory, and the City.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Vlček, Tomáš. "Art between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the

Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910-30." *Art Journal* 49, no.1 (1990): 28-35. https://www.jstor.org/stable/777177.

Witkovsky, Matthew S. "Stage Language: Milča Mayerová and the Czech Book 'Alphabet'." *The Art Bulletin* 86, no.1 (2004): 114-135. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177403.

Wright, Elaine. *Abeceda- Alphabet, Karel Teige, Milcha Mayerova, Vitezslav Nezval.* 2000. Directed by James Wechsler. Miami, Florida: The Wolfsonian-FIU. https://vimeo.com/5435609?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=1962701.

Zusi, Peter. "The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism." *Representations* 88, no.1 (2004): 102-124. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2004.88.1.102.
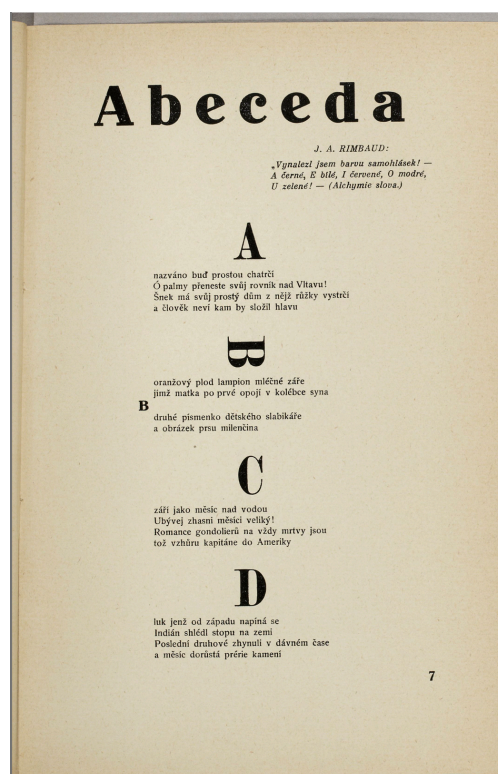
FIGURES



Figure 1: Karel Teige, typographic design for Vítezslav Nezval, "Abeceda," in *Pantomima*, (Prague, 1924), page 7. Monoskop.
https://monoskop.org/images/5/53/Nezval_Vitezslav_Pantomima.pdf
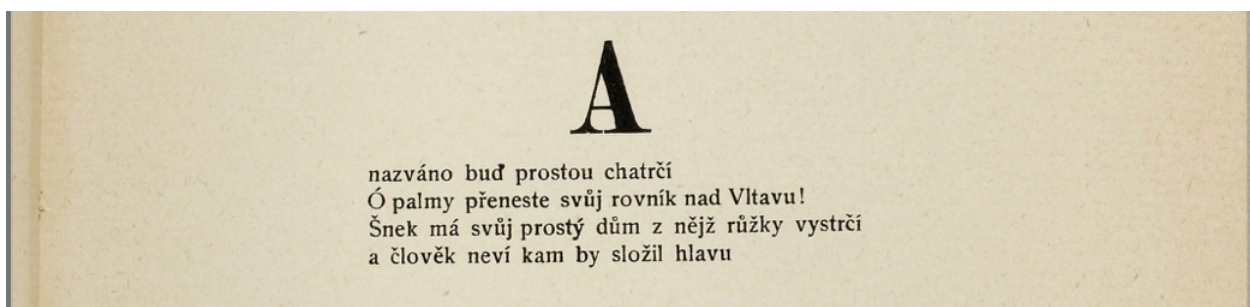


Figure 1 (detail):  Teige, *Pantomima*, 7.
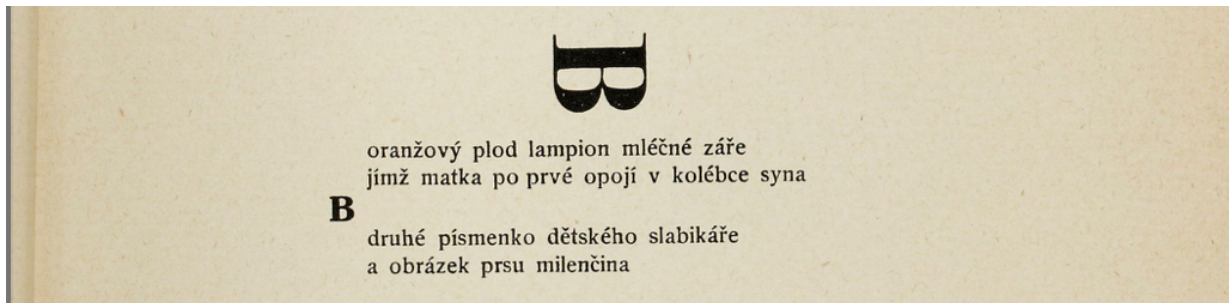
Figure 1 (detail):  Teige, *Pantomima*, 7.
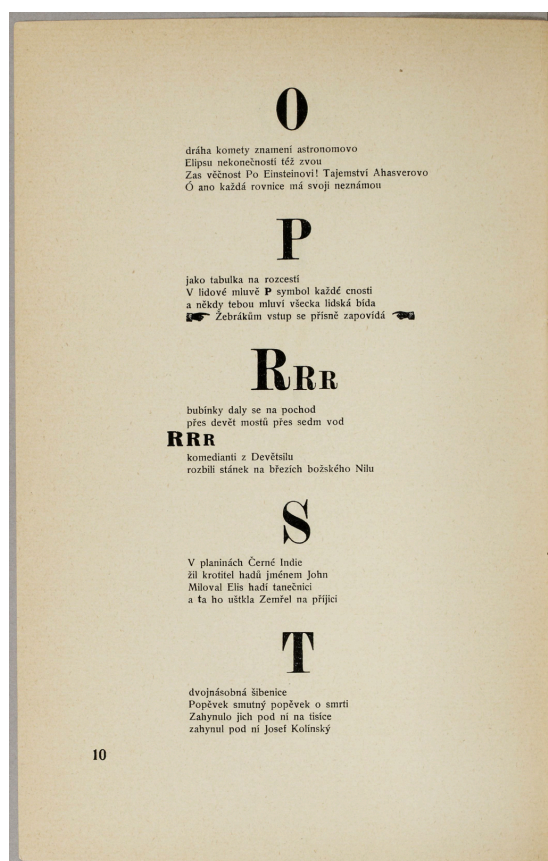


Figure 2:  Teige, *Pantomima*, 10.
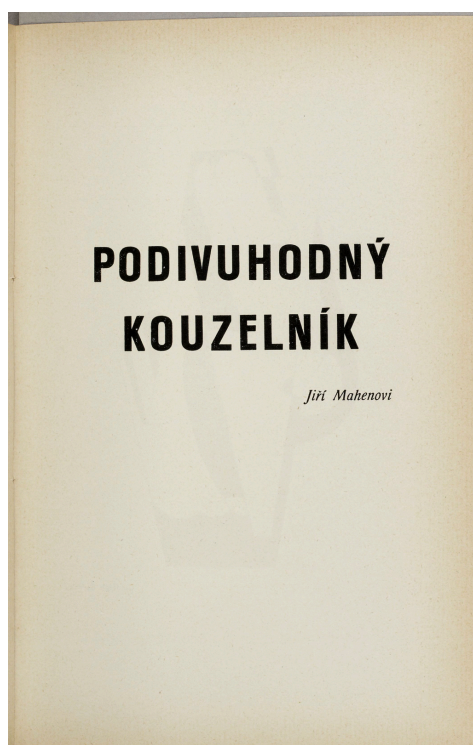
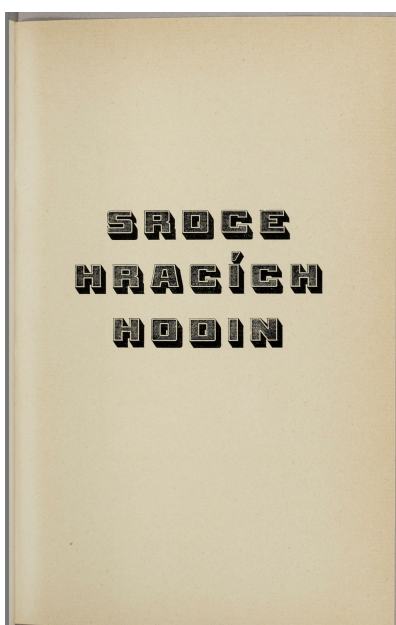Figure 3: Teige, *Pantomima*, 59.
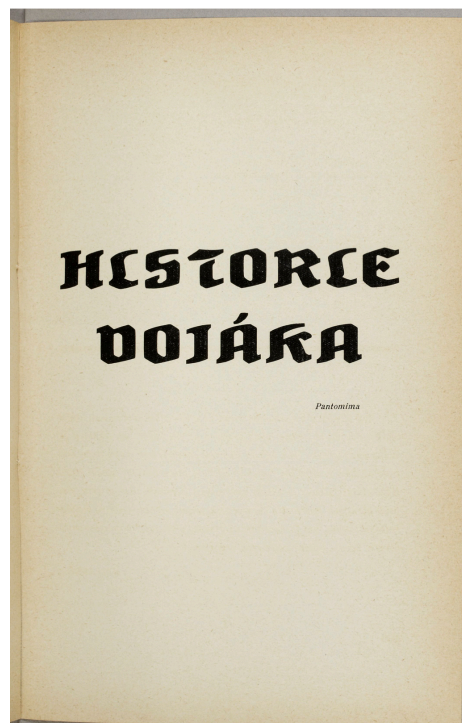


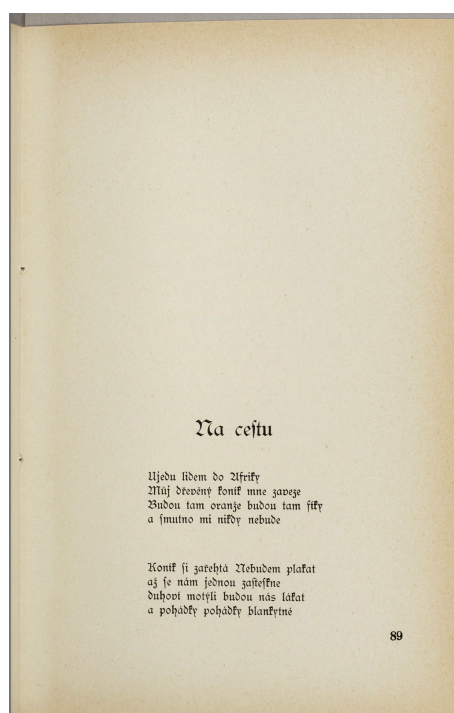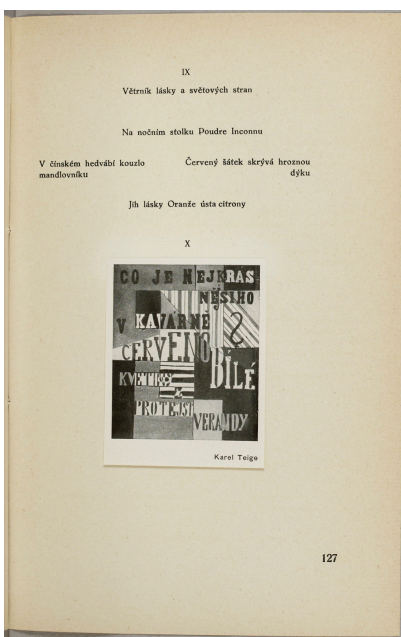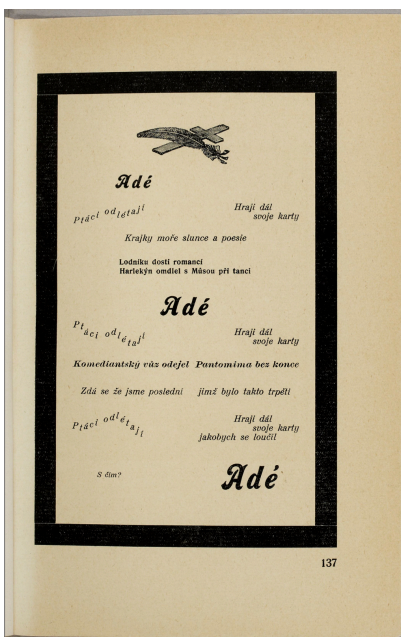Figure 4: Teige, *Pantomima*, 107.

Figure 5: Teige, *Pantomima*, 123.



Figure 6: Teige, *Pantomima*, 89.

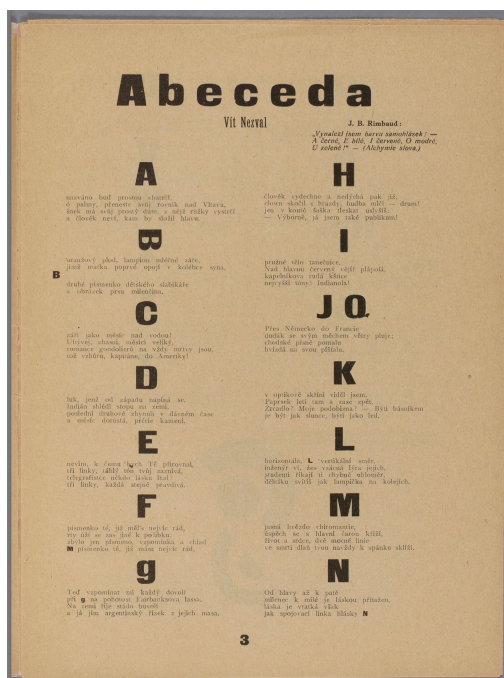Figure 7: Teige, *Pantomima*, 127.



Figure 8: Teige, *Pantomima*, 137.

Figure 9: Nezval, "*ABECEDA," Disk 1,* edited by Jaromír Krejcar, Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige, (Prague, 1923): 3., Monoskop. https://monoskop.org/images/f/fa/Disk_1_1923.pdf
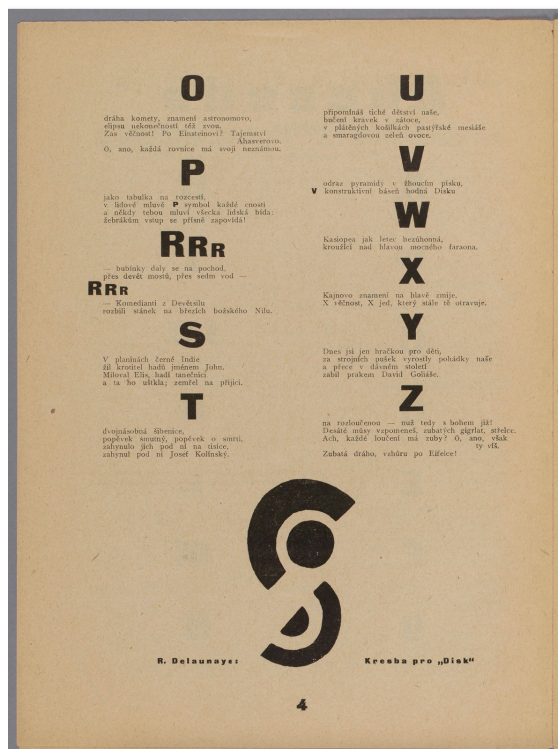


Figure 10: Nezval, "*ABECEDA," Disk 1,* edited by Jaromír Krejcar, Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige, (Prague,1923): 4.Monoskop. https://monoskop.org/images/f/fa/Disk_1_1923.pdf
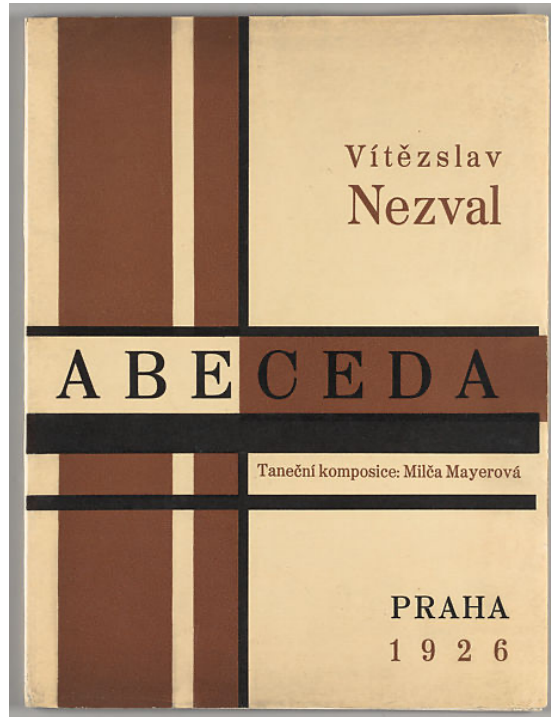
Figure 11: Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Cover, 1926, Book Design by Karel Teige, photographs by Karel Paspa, and Dance Compositions by Milča Mayerová, Published by J.Otto (Prague). Monoskop.
https://monoskop.org/images/d/da/Nezval_Vitezslav_Abeceda_1926_low_res.pdf



Figure 12: Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Page 30 and 31, 1926, Monoskop.

Figure 13: Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Page 6, 1926, Monoskop.



Figure 14: Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Page 15, 1926, Monoskop.

Figure 15: Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Page 21, 1926, Monoskop.



Figure 16:  Nezval, *ABECEDA* (Alphabet), Page 53, 1926, Monoskop