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Creative Subject and the Environment. Introduction

Whether because of the importance of the climate change, the rise of the virtual world, or the tsunami of the pandemic, the environment in which we as – both, creating and created – subjects find themselves has spoken with an undeniable emphasis. This situation provokes the researcher interested in (broadly understood) “creativity” to reconsider the relationship between the dyad of the environment and the subject. Exactly this intention and ambition lays behind the new issue of *Konteksty Kultury* (Contexts of Culture).

Six papers collected in this publication focus on the issue of creative events, actions and processes of different kinds within the greater spaces in which they occur. The main question is: how the interactions between the creating subject and its “environment” can be studied and theorized. The crucial term “environment” is meant both the materially understood space (e.g. the room in which the artist creates) and the environment understood more metaphorically (e.g. media and social discourse, collective imagery, stimulating or oppressive community, nexus of relations between the subjects involved into the creative action). The collected essays are authored by the scholars from Poland and Taiwan and conclude the Polish-Taiwanese project entitled “Creative subject and environment”, realized in 2023–2024 under the Agreement on scientific cooperation between the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taipei.

Each essay attacks the common, general problem (relation “subject – environments”) from the other side, each of them proposes less or more different understanding of the notion of “environment”.

First essay, “Looking at the Draft and Thinking the Environs. Exercises in Genetic Criticism”, authored by Mateusz Antoniuk, is devoted to the following problem: how is it possible to search for a link between genetical analysis of the rough draft and the reflection about the spatial and social surroundings, within which the creative action took place. “Environment” here is understood, firstly, as the very same sheet of paper, used by the author to create the poem, secondly, as the interpersonal and social relation, that stimulates (but also limits) creative subject’s activity, thirdly, as the “hospital”, what means: a material space, an institution and a social situation), in which the creative subject strives to preserve their subjectivity. As the cases studied in this kind of “regime of interpretation” serve the working manuscript left by three major Polish poets of twentieth century: Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Różewicz and Zbigniew Herbert.

Second essay, “*Luojiu Hua* and Its Archive: Index Cards and Wild Cards”, authored by Peng Yi, shifts our focus towards Chinese literature. By examining the manuscript materials of Guo Songfen (1938–2005) linked specifically to his last work, *Luojiu Hua* (*The Falling of All the Followers*), the paper aims to focus on the creative mode revealed by the manuscripts which can be characterized as a file system that avails itself of indexes and labels of sorts. These are first made up of initial scenario comments projecting either tentative titles or the overall structure of the work and more importantly, hidden quotations or short excerpts that Guo leaves meticulous citation information. The paper aims to look at the textual transplants from the perspective of their indexing function, that is, how they serve both as links to the “environment” – here understood as the cultural and historical memory.

Norbert Gacek in his essay entitled “The Dead Author and the Living Body. Roland Barthes’ Sanatorium Treatment and His Theory of Authorship” tries to demonstrate that the theory of the “death of the author” formulated by Roland Barthes in the late 1960s can be read in the context of the experience of the sanatorium treatment which the French theorist underwent between 1942 and 1946. The “environment” takes the shape of “sanatorium”, understood at the same moment as building, institution, specific social (and historical) situation. More metaphorically one can say that “environment” is also regarded as the illness itself.

Tadeusz Peiper (1891–1969), today remembered only by the historians of Polish literature, becomes a hero of the fourth essay, entitled “The Ruins of the Avant-Garde: The Post-War Manuscripts of Tadeusz Peiper” and authored by Jarosław Fazan. This Polish poet of Jewish descent, undisputedly one of the most important theoreticians and poets of the Polish Avant-garde in the 1920s and 1930s, in his later life (specially after 1945) suffered from the severe mental illness (probably a form schizoprenia). In the mid-1950s, at the peak of psychosis, Peiper begins a gigantic manuscript-writing work, which takes the form of an all-encompassing logoreia called “Księga pamiętnikarza” [Book of Memoirist] by the author. In its present form, the Book includes dozens of folders of manuscripts and typescripts, in addition to which folders contain excerpts and

newspaper clippings. By examining this – still unpublished, available only in the archive – manuscript, author of fourth essay tries to tell the story of a creative subject at the same moment excluded from the social environment (understood as institutions, literary life, social relations) and producing a kind of phantomatic, delusional “environment” (to some extent detached from intersubjective reality).

First four essays, although so different, have one common feature: each of them is focused on the cases (literary works, manuscript objects, authors’ biographies), which belong to the (relatively distant) history of twentieth century culture and to the domain of literature. The last two essays collected in the issue exceed this thematic circle.

Ya Ting Chang in her essay “The Website of Jean-Philippe Toussaint, or Highlighting the Creative Environment” pays the attention on the activity of Belgian-born writer, photographer, filmmaker, and plastic artist. Jean-Philippe Toussaint’s website – argues the author of fourth essay – is conceived as more than a mere online presentation of the finished artistic product. It is a device, which presents the intricacies of the creative process, seen as an action situated in the material and immaterial spaces.

Finally, Anna R. Burzyńska analyses the phenomenon of the so called “walking performance”, a specific type of collaborative artistic practice. In her essay ““Observe, Decrypt, Inform” – Working on a Walking Performance” Burzyńska tries to catch the same process of creating a walking performance – process, which can be conceptualized as a continuous mediation between narration (or performance) and environment, here understood as an urban space (in form of, both, the interiors of buildings and the open space of streets and markets).

Both the essays and the authors come from diverse backgrounds and specializations and it speaks to the width of the field of manuscript studies. On the other hand, the topic of environment, to which works included here all attempt to address, is attuned to the change and evolution of the field where the idea of manuscript or the creative process is expanded to include the performative, the digital as well as the textual and one of the most representative evolution is to venture into the material space of the hospital or sanatorium, the mindscape of the poet, the city and the personal library or archive of the author. In bringing together the six essays, the editor hope that they testify to the diversity and the continuous evolution of the modern manuscript study.

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