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Looking at the Draft and Thinking the Environs. Exercises in Genetic Criticism

Abstract: The essay 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.

Keywords: genetic criticism, environment, interpretation, Polish literature, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Różewicz, Zbigniew Herbert

1.

"Looking at the draft and thinking the environs" – since I have used it in the title of the article and repeated it in the subtitle of the introductory section, I wish to begin by substantiating this phrase, which is important to me. I will begin by commenting on its first segment before addressing it as a two-part whole with "and" as its conjunction. "Looking at the draft" is a fundamental, basic and necessary activity for genetic criticism, a research practice that seeks to understand, describe and present the creative process based on its material documents (testimonies or traces), such as the notes, plot outlines, working manuscripts, typescripts and, in the digital age, computer files, left by authors and made available for inspection when the creative process itself is already completed and belongs to the more recent or more distant past. Anyone who has ever undertaken genetic criticism is aware that it begins precisely from "looking" and that it is to "looking"

that it persistently refers. Genetic critics look at rough drafts: often, repeatedly, at length, with the naked eye and with optical instruments.

They do so in archives, libraries and reading rooms, where they spend days and weeks absorbed in precisely this: looking. The opening hours of institutions providing access to special collections are limited, so that the time that can be spent in them is always too brief for such intensive viewing, which is why, where regulations allow, genetic critics take photographs of manuscripts or order scans. All so that (including after the archival search has ended), they can continue to inspect the rough draft, whose presence is now rendered through its digital copy, which is displayed on a computer screen where it can be freely framed and enlarged. To look is the constant task of genetic critics. Yet in its passionless neutrality, the word "to look" is insufficient to describe the full spectrum of ocular activity. When they look, genetic critics "observe", "watch" and "stare", they attempt through their sight to "apprehend", "bring to light" or "penetrate" the object of their fascination. Just such a constant and obsessive looking is described in one of the most important Polish novels of the twentieth century, Witold Gombrowicz's *Kosmos* (1965).

On the fourth or fifth day my eyes strayed, not for the first time actually, far into the room, I was sipping tea, smoking a cigarette, and, having abandoned the cork, I fastened my eye on a nail in the wall, next to the shelf, and from the nail I moved on to the cupboard, I counted the slats, tired and sleepy I forayed into the less accessible places above the cupboard where the wallpaper was frayed, and I went trudging on to the ceiling, a white desert; but the tedious whiteness changed slightly farther on, near the window, into a rough, darker expanse contaminated with dampness and covered with a complex geography of continents, bays, islands, peninsulas, strange concentric circles reminiscent of the craters of the moon, and other lines, slanting, slipping away—sick in places like impetigo, elsewhere wild and unbridled, or capricious with curlicues and turns, it breathed with the terror of finality, lost itself in a giddy distance. And dots, I don't know what from, not likely from flies, their origins totally inscrutable . . . Gazing, drowned in it and in my own complexities, I gazed and gazed without any particular effort yet stubbornly, until in the end it was as if I were crossing some kind of a threshold—and little by little I was almost "on the other side"—I took a gulp of tea—Fuks asked: "What are you gawking at?"[1]

We do not know, and nor does the novel's protagonist-narrator himself know, what it means here to "be on the other side". Is it to probe the hidden essence of the ceiling ("the ceiling in itself", "pure ceilingness")? Or is it to be plunged into a madness that suggests phantasmagorias and delusions of the imagination in place of the real ceiling? One thing we do know, however, is that the narrator looks at the ceiling with the greatest intensity he is capable of achieving.

[1] W. Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, transl. D. Borchardt, New Haven–London 2005, pp. 23–24.

Genetic critics are often similar zealots of the gaze who, for many different reasons and for a variety of specific purposes, become absorbed in sheets of paper covered in erasures, smudges and crossings out. To launch one more attempt to construe a word that is partially visible beneath vigorous, sweeping deletions accomplished in several thick lines. To determine, or at least to formulate a hypothesis about, the duration of the work done on the sheet of paper. Did it amount to hours, days or, perhaps, years? To reconstruct the order of the operations carried out on the paper. Did the author begin the construction of the verse from the title or coin one when the whole text was already ready? Are the interlineations later or earlier than those in the margin? Were the deletions made as the text was being created or during a rereading, when the last dot had already been placed after the last written sentence? To hazard the meaning and status of some tiny inscription, crammed, for example, between the last line of a poem and the bottom edge of a page. Is it an attempt to continue the work or rather a metatextual passus that is not part of the work but a technical commentary? Is it, perhaps, an inscription belonging to a completely different train of thought and writing, such as a fragment of another work or a note related to the author's everyday life? To study and understand the scriptural habits of an author, the particular way in which they utilise the space of the page. Or, also, to notice an untypical deviation from the ingrained *usus scribendi*, which, after all, might carry some meaning. To check whether all of the notations on the page of the rough draft have definitely been made by one and the same hand. To reach as close an understanding as possible of the material properties of the medium (a watermark on the paper may reveal when the sheet was made, and that, in turn, might be important in dating the creative process). To gather as many insights as possible about the writing tool. Was there one or were there several? Were any changes made haphazard or were they somehow related to the method of creative work? To consider – without losing sight of the sheet of paper and remaining in contact with it – what it is possible and worthwhile to "do" with it: how to place it – among a hundred other sheets – in the reconstructed diachrony of the creative process, how to comment on it in an essay being written, how to present it in the planned genetic edition etc. etc. etc. As the protagonist and narrator of Gombrowicz's novel gawks obsessively at the ceiling (and sees it as a mysterious, vast expanse), so genetic critics gawks at a sheet of paper (and see it in manifold ways, as, for example, a trace of a meaning that is no longer present, a stage on which the spectacle of semiosis is played out, a thinking map of a brain no longer functioning, an imprint of a body already dead). And just like Gombrowicz's character, they cannot be sure whether finding themselves "on the other side" constitutes the fullness of enlightenment or the fullness of delusion. "Looking at the draft and thinking the environs". This, in turn, is the principle of the kind of genetic criticism that is interested in the creative process as an action occurring in some sort of system, context and surroundings. In other words, this is the tenet of a genetic criticism that draws upon the vision of creativity described in the preface that opens this issue of *Konteksty*

Kultury [Contexts of Culture]: a vision that emphasises the embedding of the creative subject in a network of relations with the human and non-human environs. What interests me is precisely such a sight of the rough draft and of the manuscript – a look that fixes upon the material object and finds in it traces, signs or signals that make it possible to imagine the environs of the creating subject, that is, some material or socio-symbolic whole that enables, stimulates and also limits that subject's creative action.

But is this kind of looking simply utopian? It is not difficult to write the conjunction "and" between "looking at the draft" and "thinking about the environs" with a ballpoint pen on a piece of paper or, as I am "now" doing, tap it out on a computer keyboard; it is much more difficult to actually perform the mental (imaginative) operation to which the conjunction corresponds. How do we combine viewing the material artefact and reflecting on the networked and relational nature of the creative process? To illustrate the practical difficulty of trying to "look and think" in this way, I will now carry out a certain simulation.

2.

Gustav von Aschenbach, the fictional leading character of Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*, is a great German (and at the same time European) writer. In the opening, introductory paragraphs we receive copious information on the subject of his work. Interestingly, we discover not only what kind of works von Aschenbach is writing – namely that they are voluminous novels, classical rather than experimental, that focus on the sublime and the momentous and avoid revealing the author's personal life and world – but also how he writes. It turns out, for example, that von Aschenbach was used to doing his creative work in the morning, following a restorative sleep and the ritual pouring of cold water over his body, in his own home located on the prestigious, elegant *Prinzregentenstraße* in Munich, sitting at a desk illuminated by candlelight. In the symbolic scheme of the novella, this authorial *usus* takes on meaningful features. It is, in fact, a metaphor of the self-repression to which von Aschenbach subjects his erotic drives, which are not, it turns out, fully consonant with the social norms. Although this matter could also be put a little more broadly: the self-discipline with which von Aschenbach pursues the creative process – with a kind of surplus asceticism and organisation – shows us this writer as a man who smothers his inherent desire for excess, transgression and spectacular adventure (not exclusively sexual or erotic). In the novella's main section, we see Aschenbach as a hotel guest in cholera-stricken Venice. He is utterly consumed by a fascination – at the same time aesthetic, affective and erotic – with a boy named Tadzio. It is also then that we once more gain a narrative insight into the writer's creative process. This time, however, Aschenbach works in a different way than usual, that is, from the way shown in the introduction: he relocates his creative workshop

from an enclosed interior – from a room and a building – and takes it out into open space. He writes the work on the beach, attending to sentence construction while peeping at the boy playing in the sand close by. This new mode of writing is just as symbolic as the old one practised in the Munich residence prior to his leaving: it should undoubtedly be read as signalling a departure from the stable milieu of the bourgeois study in which Aschenbach had lived and created for the greater part of his life so far.

> And what he craved, indeed, was to work on it in Tadzio's presence, to take the boy's physique for a model as he wrote, to let his style follow the lineaments of this body which he saw as divine, and to carry its beauty on high into the spiritual world, as the eagle once carried the Trojan shepherd boy up into the ether.[2]

The creative process followed in the "Munich" style (in the writer's study in *Prinzregentenstraße*) isolated creativity from what was corporeal, affective and erotic in the author himself, and was purely cerebral in nature, while that followed in the "Venetian" style (on the beach, in the presence of the adored object) draws energy from sensual impressions, erotic tensions and from the realm of the libido. At least that is how the narrator puts it; and in this fictional world it is his word that determines factuality.

> Never had he felt the joy of the word more sweetly, never had he known so clearly that Eros dwells in language, as during those perilously precious hours in which, seated at his rough table under the awning, in full view of his idol and with the music of his voice in his ears, he shaped upon Tadzio's beauty his brief essay – that page and a half of exquisite prose.[3]

However, the constraints of bourgeois stability, still powerfully active in Gustav von Aschenbach (perhaps, as the novella suggests, a part of the bio-cultural genotype of Gustav's father, the elder Aschenbach, who was a staid civil servant), have clearly not been completely shaken by the subversive influences of the South, of the East, the epidemic, Eros and, following close behind, Thanatos. For here, in the course of writing, in the course of the work's creation, the work of sublimation is done. As a result, the erotic – sinful, shameful, but potent – impulse of the process of textual creation remains itself beyond the order of the manifest (or even of the semi-apparent or allusive) textual (rhetorical, linguistic) representation. It becomes invisible (Does that also mean that it is not present?) in the text that reaches readers. Let us complete the interrupted quotation:

[2] T. Mann, *Death in Venice*, in: idem, *Death in Venice and Other Stories*, transl. D. Luke, London 1998, p. 239.

[3] Ibidem.

> [...] he shaped upon Tadzio's beauty his brief essay – that page and a half of exquisite prose which with its limpid nobility and vibrant controlled passion was soon to win the admiration of many. It is a well that the world knows only a fine piece of work and not also its origins, the condition under which it came into being; for knowledge of the sources of an artist's inspiration would often confuse readers and shock them, and then excellence of the writing would be of no avail.[4]

Let us turn, then, to the experiment announced earlier, to the imaginative simulation. Let us say that Gustav von Aschenbach is a real character: a great German and European writer, who was actually working in the concluding decades of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth century. He died in Venice, during a vacation. His final, uncompleted work of prose was actually written in the last days before his death, during a time when the author really did experience a fascination with the boy. Quite clearly, this is a paedophiliac fascination. It cannot be defined otherwise in the dictionary of our contemporary sensibilities, in the field of our contemporary awareness of this medico-social question. We, however – and this is an important element of this imaginative simulation – are not in possession of straightforwardly biographical knowledge revealing these inclinations of the great writer: he left no intimate diaries, no personal letters or notes, and none of his contemporaries left behind the slightest mention. More than one-hundred years after the death of the writer in Venice, we, along with the rest of the "world" continue to admire "that page and a half of exquisite prose". We are also, though, genetic critics, researchers in the field of manuscript studies, who seek access to the original record. This turns out to be possible, as a rough manuscript has survived and is available in an archive.

Are we able when we look at von Aschenbach's rough draft to detect any indications of the environs? That is to say, can we establish that the rough draft was written not in the flat on *Prinzregentenstraße*, but on a beach in Venice? And that that change of place was at the same time a change – a radical, not fully controlled change – of the mental context in which the creative process took place? How would the manuscript have to look if it were to include such indications within it? Perhaps, concealed beneath deletions, or better, beneath heavy smudges, there should be passages that – at least allusively – refer to erotic, forbidden depths; perhaps the text should be accompanied by drawings of some sort? What, however, if there are no drawings at all in this rough draft? (it was not Aschenbach's custom to sketch; he was a pure scribe) What if there are no deletions? Or – another variant of the simulation game – What if there are, but all are "innocent", "non-Freudian", just a substitution of the conjunction "and" for a comma? The answer is simple: even if we were to gawk at this manuscript as maniacally as the narrator of Gombrowicz's novel gawked at the ceiling (at other places in the novel: at the cork of a bottle, at junk discarded about a garden, at

[4] Ibidem.

a pebble in the road – oh yes, he really was a fanatical observer!), we still would not see anything in it that would allow us to think about the "environs" (that is, about the beach, Venice, the contagion, the emotions and the tensions). But that is not all. Let us now imagine that knowledge of the situational context of the creative process (murky in this case) nevertheless comes to light. Let us say that a letter from von Aschenbach to some close confidant containing a detailed description of the creative process from the Venetian beach is found. In possession of this knowledge we look again at the manuscript: the one without drawings and significant deletions. What then? Nothing, in fact. The "environs" here are exclusively an object of knowledge, and not of seeing. We know simply that Aschenbach wrote this work in a specific place and situation, but that place and that situation possess no evidential substance in respect of the materiality of the document. There is no linkage whatsoever between "looking" and "thinking".

I now exit simulation mode, cease to treat Aschenbach as a real writer and turn to generalities. It is in the nature of things that a manuscript is subject to decontextualization. It loses its original context. And, after Walter Benjamin, we could also state that it loses its aura. No longer conjoined with a pen (or any other tool that left its mark on it), no longer linked – through the writing tool – to the writing body or the writing mind, removed from the place where it was written down, already existing in another time, the manuscript cannot always refer us back to the environs of the creative process.

Definitely not always. However, in some cases and to a certain degree, it sometimes can. In this essay, I attempt to look for just such cases. Namely, I perform three exercises in the spirit of "Looking at the draft and thinking the environs", three exercises in the practise of a looking that seeks to discern in a rough manuscript the manifestations of the condition of a subject as situated in relation to, or interaction with, the "environs" (or at least some aspect of the environs) as variously understood. None of these exercises will conclude in a complete operational success. Each will leave behind it some kind of deficiency in terms of linking the study of the materiality of a manuscript with a study of the sociology or psychology of creativity (in other words, in terms of the value of that "and" between "looking" and "thinking"). At the same time, however, I hope that, taken together, they will produce a positive result.

3. Exercise one

In the history of Polish literature, Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004), poet, prose writer, essayist and winner of the Nobel-Prize for literature (1980), possesses the status of one of the most important, if not *the* most important, of Polish twentieth century

poets.[5] His poetry, rich in forms, styles and themes, is difficult to summarise; I do not undertake that task here. I will only mention that, among the numerous styles the poet employed, there was also a "high" style, with elegant, classicizing phrasing in long, dithyrambic lines, while the dominant thematic threads and motifs included praise of being, a fascination with life, an intense sense of his own transience, the ambiguousness of his own identity and the inability to fully articulate experience. These stylistic qualities and these thematic components combine in a poem he wrote dated to the summer of 1969. It cannot be taken with certainty as a synecdoche of Miłosz's poetry as a whole, but in it one can see a work representative of certain of its stylistic and thematic currents.

Przed krajobrazem

Na tym stoku świerk, jodła i cedr, na tamtym sosnowe bory.
Błyszczy dział wód spływających w zachodni i wschodni ocean.
Tylko jedna stężona rzeka struży się prosto na północ,
Gdzie przezroczysta szarość w złotawej górskiej bramie,
Szarość ogromnej ciszy, blade jeziora,
I bagienna jedlina jeszcze tysiąc mil
Aż do granicy lasów, pustki polarnej.
W moich snach ziemia była jednością mojego ciała,
Tutaj nad Athabasca i wszędzie gdzie żyłem, wędrowny.
Opierałem rękę o spiętrzenia gór.
Delty kroiły mnie w upale smoczych pobojowisk.
I czekałem, nie mając w języku wyrazów,
Żeby nazwać to wszystko co moje i ziemi,
Aż duch jakiś, z wulkanicznych mutacji poczęty,
Krzyknie i odczaruje nasze prawdziwe imię.[6]

The verse takes the following form in English translation:

[5] The most complete presentation of Czesław Miłosz's poetry in the English translation can be found in the following volumes: Cz. Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931–2001*, New York 2001; idem, *Selected and Last Poems 1931–2004*, New York 2014. The bibliography of English-language works on the Czesław Miłosz's writings is vast. The role of the basic study is still fulfilled by the monograph by Aleksander Fiut *The Eternal Moment* (the newest edition: Berkeley 2020; translated from the Polish original: *Moment wieczny*, first edition in 1987). For further reading in English see also: Ł. Tischner, *Miłosz and the Problem of Evil*, Evanston 2015; S. Bill, *Faith in the Flesh: Body, Belief, and Human Identity*, Oxford 2021. Czesław Miłosz's creative process has already been addressed by Polish scholars in Polish-language studies, but relatively little space has been devoted to this subject in studies written in English (see: M. Antoniuk, "Poetics, Genetics, Work: On the Art of Rhyming", transl. M. Olsza, *Forum Poetyki = Forum of Poetics* 2020, no. 21, pp. 30–53.

[6] Cz. Miłosz, *Wiersze*, vol. 3, Kraków 2003, p. 102.

Before a Landscape

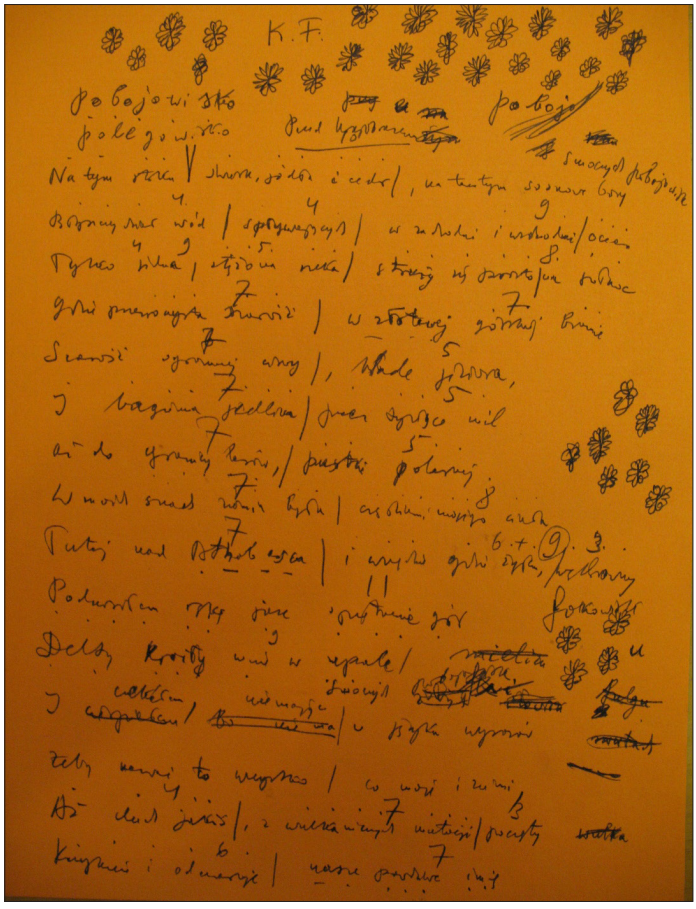
On this slope, spruce, fir and cedar, on that pine woods.
A shining ridge splits the waters flowing to the western and eastern ocean.
Only one thickened river cuts dead north a thousand miles more,
Meeting clear greyness in a golden mountain gorge,
The greyness of vast quiet, pale lakes,
And miry fir woods
As far as the forests' edge, as far as the polar void.
In my dreams the earth and my body were one,
Here above Athabasca and wherever I have lived, wandering.
I rested my arm on the summits.
The deltas sliced me in the flaming aftermaths of dragon furies.
And I waited, wanting in expressions,
To name all that is mine and the earth's,
For some phantom, conceived in volcanic mutations,
To scream and conjure our true name.

Miłosz worked quite intensively on the Polish original, in a series of trials and studies. In the Beinecke Library in the United Sates, where the major portion of the poet's extensive archive is kept, there are nine sheets of paper covered with notations, which clearly constitute a rough draft. Its striking features are the numerous deletions, the interlineations and the arrows rearranging the order of words. The sheets are identical in format (A4) and colour (orange). Also, all of the notations appear to have been made with the same ballpoint pen and in dark ink. This permits the cautious suggestion that the work was created in a single text-making session.

What interests me now is one of these orange-coloured sheets of paper with crossings out: the one shown in Illustration no. 1. Even without knowledge of the Polish language, based on "pure" observation, it can be seen that the page became a medium for two types of inscription. Put in the simplest terms, what we see here is a record of the text being created, a sequence of words intended to make up a whole poem.

Na tym stoku świerk, jodła i cedr, na tamtym sosnowe bory.
[On this slope, spruce, fir and cedar, on that pine woods.]
Błyszczy dział wód spływających w zachodni i wschodni ocean.
[A shining ridge splits the waters flowing to the western and eastern ocean.]

But we also have inscriptions of a metatextual nature, that form a sort of commentary on the emerging text.



Il. 1. Czesław Miłosz, poem *Przed krajobrazem* [Before a Landscape], rough draft, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

. . ..
Na tym stoku /świerk, jodła i cedr /, na tamtym sosnowe bory.

. . . 4. 4 . 9 . . .
Błyszczy dział wód / spływających / w zachodni i wschodni / ocean.

There is nothing strange about the fact that the metatextual marks did not appear in the printed version; that was not their purpose. They undoubtedly served the poet himself during the creative process; they were annotations highlighting those qualities of the nascent work to which the poet paid particular attention. It seems clear that they were referring to sonic and rhythmic qualities. To guess the function of the numbers is easiest: they indicate the number of syllables falling

into specific sections of verse. The first number "4" refers to the four syllables in the sequence "*Bły-szczy – dział – wód*", the second number "4" indicates the four syllables in the word "*spły-wa-ją-cych*", while the number "9" corresponds with the nine syllables in the sequence "*w za – cho – dni – i – wscho – dni – o – ce – an*". The poem *Before a Landscape* is not an isosyllabic poem based on strict verse equivalence in terms of syllable count (the verse span varies from 17 to 11 syllables). Yet while writing, Miłosz clearly wanted to monitor the variability of the syllabic format. It is more difficult, though, to surmise the function of the solidi, which divide the units into verses according to some sort of principle known to Miłosz, which does not, however, correspond with a systematic rule of delimitation. Or at least – after gawking at this rough draft many times – I have not been able to identify such a principle (it is not the division into pre-caesura and post-caesura sections or into any objectively distinguishable prosodic units). I would conjecture that in this way Miłosz marked divisions into units for reading aloud, for declamation, in accordance with the internal rhythm of the text (in the way in which he himself heard it). Yet the dots above the words remain the least clear to me in respect of their function. They do not mark accents. The two-syllable word "*sto-ku*" [slope] was written with two dots above each of the syllables, but in accordance with the principles of Polish prosody the accent in this word falls only on the first syllable, so that an attempt to articulate it with two accent markers has to sound unnatural and clumsy. So do the dots indicate the number of syllables? Once again, no: given that as many as two dots appear above the word "*cedr*" [cedar], which is without doubt monosyllabic and has only a single accent. Perhaps it would be best to settle for stating that what the dots indicate here is a sonic quality of some sort as perceived by the author.

Looking at this rough draft, I become aware that the observation that has taken place makes it possible, in a certain sense – likely quite narrow, but nevertheless real – to think about the environs in which the poet created his work. In what sense? Well, the contention arises that the page itself appears to us here as a part of a setting, in which the creating subject found himself and with which he entered into a relationship, which he needed. He needed it for precisely that reason: to be a creating subject.

> Perhaps the expression "to leave traces" is not precise enough as a metaphor; perhaps this metaphor may give the impression, that hesitation takes place "inside" peoples' heads and that the paper traces are merely a record of this cognitive process.[7]

Dirk van Hulle's observation goes to the heart of the matter. The longer I look at the orange-coloured page from Illustration no. 1, the more I become convinced that it is not only a place for the temporary recording of a poem,

[7] D. Van Hulle, *Modern Manuscripts: The Extended Mind and Creative Undoing from Darwin to Beckett and Beyond*, London–New Delhi–New York–Sydney 2014, p. 185.

a place to set down its successive versions – as generated and modified "in the head" – but something more. Namely, it is a device exploited by the poet. The poet needed to fix his eyes on the sheet of paper, he needed to see his verse on it – accompanied by numerous annotations (known to him) in order to better hear its internal rhythm. More than this, even – he needed to touch the piece of paper with his ballpoint – not only when he was writing words down, but also when he was not writing words down. The small drawings appearing in the margins – known as doodles – are definitely connected in some way to the creative process, even if we do not know exactly how. Did they, for example, help in gaining and regaining concentration or make the act of selecting words itself easier? Did they provide an occasion to rest and so aid mental regeneration? Be that as it may, an inspection of the archive makes it possible to conclude that the poem "Before a Landscape" was born not only "in the subject", but in the subject remaining in a visual and haptic relationship with the environs and, more precisely, with a minor but, at that moment, essential element of the setting: the rectangular orange-coloured sheet of paper. In Bruno Latour's dictionary, this sheet of paper could be described as a non-human actor or an actant in genesis.[8] After Clark and Chalmers, we could describe it as an extended mind, merged (at that time, during the writing session of August 1969) with that of the poet.[9] For my part, I would most readily fall back on another metaphor. That is, to think of this sheet of paper as the already deactivated and partially dismantled apparatus of a text-making laboratory: it undoubtedly served its purpose in trying out and producing verses, feet, caesuras and clauses, but how it worked exactly, and whether it broke down – that I cannot say.

The weakness of the first exercise in "looking at the draft and thinking the environs" is the relatively narrow scope of conceptualisation: the environs here turn out to be the draft itself, the very object deposited in the archive. It does not refer us to a broader conception of the environs: one that is more sociological, economic or political. I shall endeavour to overcome this weakness in the second exercise.

4. Exercise two

Tadeusz Różewicz (1921–2014), younger by ten years than Miłosz, is a further outstanding figure in Polish letters after WWII. A poet, but also a prose writer and playwright (his play *Kartoteka* [The File] became one of the most important

[8] B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, New York 2005. See also: G. Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Melbourne 2009, pp. 99–118.

[9] A. Clark, D. Chalmers, *The Extended Mind*, in: *The Extended Mind*, ed. R. Menary, Cambridge 2010, pp. 27–42.

Polish plays of the twentieth century), he was renowned as a creator of unsettling texts revolving around themes such as "the death of God", the crisis of culture and religion, and the trauma of war.[10] It is only the last of these leitmotifs that appears, and only to a relatively limited degree, in the verse written in a document dated to April, 1945, which is shown in Illustration no. 2. The leading character is a Soviet soldier of the Red Army, which in 1944–1945, while taking significant casualties, liberated Poland from the German occupation (at the same time bringing the latter country enslavement by the USSR and its subjection to a communist government imposed by the Soviets: on this, the poem is silent). It is difficult today to determine with what intention Różewicz wrote this poem in the spring of 1945. How far did he treat it as an authentic expression of his sensibilities and how far as a necessary tribute paid to the new, communist authorities? The poem does not give access to the interior of the poet's psyche and, in any case, it is not at all my aim to seek such access. In connection with this verse, it is another matter that interests me.

It is easy to notice that the sheet of paper is covered with two layers of inscriptions: the text of the verse, bashed out on a typewriter, and the handwritten corrections. The text appears in Polish below alongside its English translation. This translation inevitably loses the various stylistic features of the original (the original is rhymed), yet it captures its content reasonably closely.

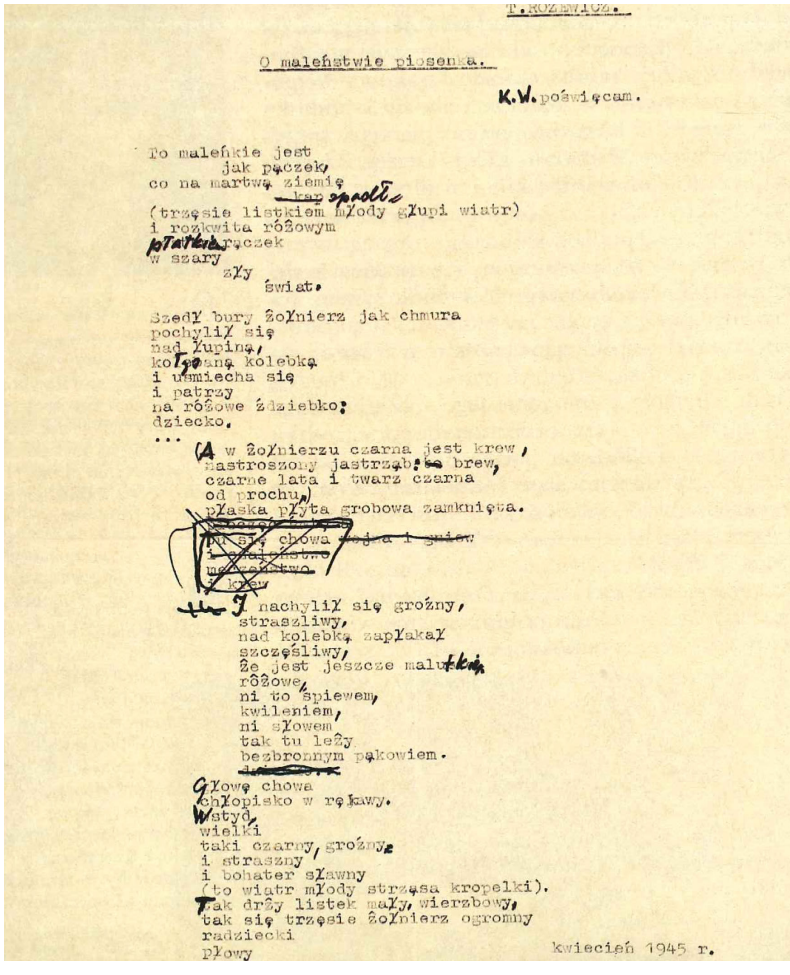
O maleństwie piosenka	Song of a Newborn
To maleńkie jest	This little one is
jak pączek	like a bud
co na martwą ziemię	that on dead earth
kap	drip
(trzęsie listkiem młody głupi wiatr)	(the young witless wind shakes the leaf)
I rozkwita różowym	There is a pink blossoming
płatkiem rączek	a petal of minute hands
W szary	In the grey
zły	bad
świat	world
Szedł bury żołnierz jak chmura	Came the dun soldier as a cloud
Pochylił się	He leaned
Nad łupiną kołysaną kolebką	Over the cradle-rocked husk
I uśmiecha się	And he smiles
i patrzy	and looks

[10] Tadeusz Różewicz's poems and plays are available in English translations. See for example: *They Came to See a Poet: Selected Poems*, transl. A. Czerniawski, London 2004; *Reading the Apocalypse in Bed: Selected Plays and Short Pieces*, transl. A. Czerniawski, New York 1998.

na różowe ździebko:	at the pink tot:
dziecko	a child.
A w żołnierzu czarna jest krew	And the blood in the soldier is black
Nastroszony jastrząb to brew	The bristling hawk is the brow
Czarne lata i twarz czarna	Black years and face black
Od prochu	From gunpowder
Płaska płyta grobowa zamknięta	Flat burial slab shut
Tu się chowa wojna i gniew	Here war and anger hide
I szaleństwo	And folly
Męczeństwo	Martyrdom
I krew	And blood
I nachylił się groźny	And he leaned with menace
Straszliwy	Dreadful
nad kolebką zapłakał	over the birthplace he wept
szczęśliwy	happy
że jest jeszcze	that it is still
malutkie	tiny
różowe	pink
ni to śpiewem	not with song
kwileniem	wailing
ni słowem	or a word
tak tu leży bezbronnym pąkowiem	so lies the defenceless bud
Głowę chowa	He hides his head
chłopisko w rękawy	the stalwart lad in his sleeves
wstyd	shame
wielki	deep
taki czarny, groźny	so black, menacing
i straszny	and terrible
i bohater sławny	and a famous hero
(to wiatr młody strząsa kropelki)	(the young wind shakes the droplets)
Tak drży listek mały wierzbowy	So trembles the willow leaf
Tak się trzęsie żołnierz ogromny	So shakes the hulking soldier
Radziecki	Soviet
Płowy	Flaxen
Lew	Lion

We do not know who produced the typescript: whether it was Różewicz himself or someone who had access to a typewriter and copied the text based on the manuscript provided. We do know, however, whose hand performed the

manual correction, which mainly involved deleting (words or entire verses) and adding punctuation: seven full stops, fourteen commas, two colons and one ellipsis to be precise. Well, it was not the hand of the poem's author, but of someone to whom the author presented the typescript for inspection: that of Julian Przyboś (1901–1970). At the time, in April 1945, a great deal separated Różewicz and Przyboś, the two creative personalities that meet symbolically on this page.



T. RÓŻEWICZ.

O maleństwie piosenka.

K.W. poświęcam.

To maleńkie jest
jak pączek,
co na martwą ziemię
~~trzy~~ spadł
(trzęsie listkiem młody głupi wiatr)
i rozkwita różowym
pączek
w szary
zły
świat.

Szedł bury żołnierz jak chmura
pochylił się
nad łupiną,
kolebką kolebką
i uśmiecha się
i patrzy
na różowe źdźbisko:
dziecko.
...
(A w żołnierzu czarna jest krew,
nastroszony jastrząb: ~~ta~~ brew,
czarne lata i twarz czarna
od prochu,)
płaska płyta grobowa zamknięta.
~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible] chowa [illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
I nachylił się groźny,
straszliwy,
nad kolebką zapłakał
szczęśliwy,
że jest jeszcze mały
różowe,
ni to śpiewem,
kwileniem,
ni słowem
tak tu leży
bezbronnym pąkowiem.
~~[illegible]~~
Głowę chowa
chłopisko w rękawy.
Wstyd,
wielki
taki czarny, groźny
i straszny
i bohater sławny
(to wiatr młody strząsa kropelki).
Tak drży listek mały, wierzbowy,
tak się trzęsie żołnierz ogromny
radziecki
płowy

kwiecień 1945 r.

Il. 2. Tadeusz Różewicz, poem *O maleństwie piosenka* [Song of a Newborn], typescript corrected by Julian Przyboś (reproduction published in: Z. Majchrowski, Wrocław 2002)

The twenty-four-year-old Tadeusz Różewicz was only just setting out on his journey as a poet. Behind him, before the war broke out, were his schooldays and his adolescence at a gymnasium in Radomsko, a provincial Polish town. Then came his experience as a member of a partisan forestry unit fighting the German occupation. He wrote verse both as a gymnasium pupil and as a partisan. They were, however, his first juvenile efforts – far from the crystallisation of his own idiom, style or repertoire of devices. Różewicz was still only just beginning his search for his own language. At the same time, Julian Przyboś, who was exactly twenty years older than Różewicz, had long been a poet with a perfectly pitched voice, powerful poetics and his own very recognisable stylistic signature. Przyboś was beginning to write poetry when Różewicz was born, that is, in the early 1920s. When war broke out in 1939, he was already established as the most important living Polish poet working in the avant-garde movement – as opposed to a more traditional, backward-looking poetics then described as *paseizm* [fr. *passéisme*].

The sheet of paper we are able to inspect via Illustration no. 2 can be described as the setting of a pedagogical drama. The "made subject" (a forty-four-year-old poet who has published several important volumes of poetry) exerts pressure on the "subject in the making" (a twenty-four-year-old poet only just reaching beyond his initial, stylistically divergent lyrical ventures). The correction, which with a teacherly gesture is performed by this "experienced pillar of the avant-garde" (incidentally, Przyboś had earlier worked as teacher of Polish in a gymnasium), is consistent and comparatively easy to explain. Anyone familiar with Przyboś's poetic practice prior to 1945 knows that he attached great importance to punctuation in his own poems. He drew upon a broad repertoire of punctuation, believed that the proper placement of punctuation marks in a poetic text was extremely important, and was irritated by what he considered the pernicious practice of abandoning punctuation altogether in poetry (as practised in the 1930s by Józef Czechowicz, one of the rival Polish avant-gardists). With equal conviction, Przyboś also declared his condemnation of circumlocution. Instead, he expected a poem to be condensed, and restricted only to structurally necessary elements. I do not wish to claim that, by correcting the typescript, Przyboś sought to make Różewicz a poet "in his own image and likeness", but it is difficult to deny that the typescript is here a stage on which the mature, fully-formed avant-garde poetics of the 1930s attempts in some measure to subjugate the unformed, not yet secure, emerging poetics of the debutant from the mid-1940s. The thought occurs that this situation could be described in terms – if suitably transformed – set out by Harold Bloom.[11] Bloom was, of course, writing of the influence that one "strong poet" has on another "strong poet" through temporary distancing, from a position of a "precursor". The sheet of paper I am looking at is, however, a visualisation of the "influence" exerted by a "strong poet" who is not here a "precursor" but an immediately present "teacher". Bloom went on to consider

[11] See H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, London 1973.

the various strategies deployed by successor poets to cope with influence. The page we are looking at tells us nothing about the response of a poet subjected to influence (this will be discussed below).

The thing is, however, that the "battle of poetics" is not the only discernible action here. Looking at exactly the same marks on the paper, we can see something else, something more: a record not only of stylistic but also institutional pressures. In April 1945, Różewicz was not only a poet still seeking his tone of voice, but also looking to enter the game known as "literary life". And that game was just beginning to get going according to new, post-war principles. By that same April of 1945, Przyboś was not only a poet with his own, distinctive poetics, but also a strong player in the field of literary life. He was President of the Polish Writers' Union and head of the poetry section of the newly-established cultural magazine *Odrodzenie* [Revival, Renaissance]. Moreover, he belonged to the group launching the new, state-owned publishing house *Czytelnik* [Reader] and was in good standing with the new political authorities. If only on this account (and also due to his informal authority in the professional milieu, his acquaintanceships and position), he was able to exert a substantial influence by facilitating the printing of poems or access to creative scholarships. With this in mind, we can now see in the typescript shown in Illustration no. 2 an object that participated in a social game in a particular professional setting. By handing over the typescript of his poem to Przyboś, Różewicz also declares his accession to, his will to join, the world of "real" (institutionalised) literature, while Przyboś, by handing over the typescript to the author with the corrections made, confirms his position as a person endowed with the power of management. The typescript thus turns out not only to be the scene of tensions between the two poetics, but also the stage on which the relations of power and subordination that undoubtedly characterise every professional milieu are revealed. In this second function, the typescript could be described in the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, which was devised after all for the study of the sociology of culture and, specifically, of literature.[12] Różewicz, the author of typewritten words, is someone trying to make a name for himself in the field of literature, while Przyboś, the author of the deletions and corrections, is someone already installed in, and at the same time confirming himself in, the role of consecrator, that is, of an agent who introduces new players into the field of literary play, granting them the right to enter and to be active there.

Five years after the two poets worked together on this single poem, the work was printed, in 1950, in one of Różewicz's volumes. By then, Różewicz was no longer a publicly unknown ex-partisan only just beginning to think about "creating poetry", but the author of two books of poetry of his own (1947, 1949 respectively). His position was gaining strength and he was regarded as an important representative of the most recent Polish poetry. Comparing the version published

[12] P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, transl. S. Emanuel, Cambridge 1996.

in 1950 with the typescript drawn up in 1945, it can be stated that Różewicz neither accepted the master's amendments uncritically nor rejected them wholesale. Instead, he chose on some points to obey (or allowed himself to be persuaded), while on others he stuck to his guns. Ultimately, *O maleństwie piosenka* [Song of a Newborn] is not an especially significant work. In no way does it belong to any of the central strands of this oeuvre. Yet its history as a text proves symptomatic: not only in this one work, but in all of his early work, Różewicz remained under the influence of Przyboś, but at the same time he knew how to work through this influence. By assimilating and processing the impulses flowing from the "old avant-gardist", he invented his own, unique poetic diction.

For the reason that the typescript, originally conceived as a fair copy, became, as a result of Przyboś's intervention, a rough draft, a document that served in further work (or a resumption of work) on the text, I think when looking at this draft about the environs. The setting here, however, is no longer (as in the first exercise) a concrete material object, but the totality of the relations of power, influence and authority in which Tadeusz Różewicz – the creating subject – found himself in the spring of 1945. Creating this particular poem, but also creating himself as a poet and as a participant in literary life.

Perhaps, however, it would be possible to raise the stakes still further and propose a look at a rough draft, in which the situational circumstances of genesis are recorded in an even more tangible way.

4. Exercise three

In the history of Polish twentieth-century poetry, Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998) occupies a position comparable with those of Czesław Miłosz and Tadeusz Różewicz. Like them, he is regarded as a colossus – a status he earned while still alive.[13] The verse to which I now need to refer is certainly not one of Herbert's most representative or important works. It was composed in 1991 and published in the same year. It therefore falls within the late phase of the work of this poet.

Here it is in the original.

[13] The most extensive compilation of Herbert's poetry in English, which runs to more than six-hundred pages and contains the poems the author published in his lifetime and included in volumes of poetry, is Z. Herbert, *Collected Poems 1956–1998*, transl. A. Valles, New York 2007. More than seven-hundred pages of Herbert's essays and other writings await readers in *The Collected Prose 1948–1998*, New York 2010 (various translators). The main English-language monograph on Herbert's poetry is: S. Barańczak, *Fugitive from Utopia: The Poetry of Zbigniew Herbert*, Cambridge 1987. I have written about Zbigniew Herbert's creative process in the following works: "The Unfinished Text in the Thickening Description: From Genetic Criticism to Cultural Transfer Studies (The Case of Zbigniew Herbert's *Winter Tale*", *Textual Cultures*" 2020, vol. 13 no. 2, pp. 172–196; "Herbert, Narcissus and the Fly, or the Process of Text Creation as an Exercise in Reinterpretation", *Konteksty Kultury* 2018, no. 1, pp. 71–90.

Mitteleuropa

Alexandrowi Schenkerowi

Nie wiadomo czy z mięsa czy z pierza
ku czemu to wszystko zmierza
Mitteleuropa
niby świeci i gaśnie
zupełnie jakby z baśni
Ezopa

Znalazł się cesarz oto
niejaki Habsburg Otto
całkiem porządny człowiek
są jeszcze w zapasie Bourboni
lecz serio mówiąc oni
nie całkiem ten-tego

Wiec ludzi gniewa lub cieszy
ta igraszka dla rzeszy
nagle wyjście w potrzebie
pojawia się nad widnokręgiem
sunie niebieskim kręgiem
jakby księżyc po niebie

Niech jeszcze trochę poświeci
kolorowa zabawka dzieci
sen nostalgiczny staruszków
lecz mówiąc całkiem szczerze
ja w to wszystko nie wierze
(i zwierzam wam się na uszko)[14]

And here is the same piece in English translation:

Central Europe

To Alexander Schenker

It's neither fish nor fowl
and has no obvious goal
Central Europe
jumps out and flails
like one of the tales
of Aesop

[14] Z. Herbert, *Mitteleuropa*, in: idem, *Rovigo*, Wrocław 1992, p. 30.

Hapsburg Otto served us – a solid man he was –
in the role of our Caesar
we still have some Bourbons
but I'll say in all earnest
they are quite inferior

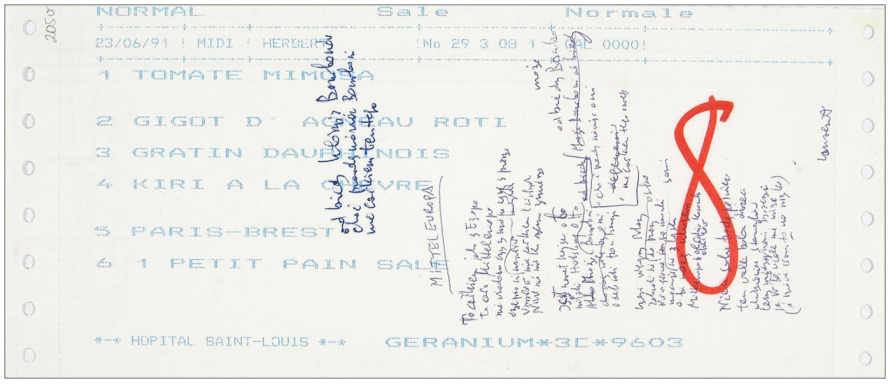
This plaything of Caesars
either angers or pleases
a quick exit on standby
appears on the horizon
its blue circle drawn
like a moon in the sky

Let it shine for a while
painted toy of a child
old man's nostalgic dreams
but between us I admit
I don't believe any of it
(I might as well come clean)[15]

This satirical work alludes to the discussion underway when it was written of the socio-political state of the European continent following the fall of the communist bloc and the iron curtain. It oscillates between humour, derision and pessimism. I am less occupied, however, with interpreting the piece, which is a task I am happy to put to one side. The urgent matter, in line with the core concern of my paper, is to look at the rough draft and think about the environs.

The verse's genetic dossier, which contains three documents, is kept in the collections of *Biblioteka Narodowa* [National Library] in Warsaw. In reverse chronological order (from the latest to the earliest), they are a typescript, a manuscript that is very nearly a fair copy and a working manuscript, which is the earliest extant and likely the earliest document of work on the text. It is the latter that interests us here. It is displayed in Illustration no. 3.

[15] Z. Herbert, *Central Europe*, in: idem, *The Collected Poems 1956–1998*, transl. A. Valles, New York 2007, p. 485.



Il. 3. Zbigniew Herbert, poem *Mitteleuropa* [Central Europe], rough draft, National Library of Poland, Warsaw

The sheet of paper we are looking at has the status of a palimpsest. The first layer – a mechanical record made by an office printing machine – reveals the object's original function. Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris on 23 June 1991 issues receipt number 29 3 08 to a patient named Herbert. This voucher certifies that the bearer is entitled to a meal consisting of the following items during his hospitalisation: tomatoes, lamb, cheese, a bread roll. As a second layer, I see an inscription written in Herbert's hand: this is the first draft of the emerging poem "*Mitteleuropa*". Within this layer, too, it is possible to distinguish sub-layers, marked with different colours – a detail that could support the hypothesis that the action of writing was prolonged and divided into phases. The third layer is a large mark made with a red felt-tip. In itself, it is difficult to identify. What is more, it would be difficult to determine from the form of the writing who made it (let alone for what purpose). An answer is provided by a broader search of Herbert's archive. We can conclude from it that the poet made similar marks on other documents of his creative process (in the material form of loose sheets of paper) that were written at a similar time, that is, in the summer of 1991. The shape drawn with a felt-tip is to be read as the number "8". As do the numbers, dots and slashes in Miłosz's rough draft (analysed above), it has the character of a metatextual sign. It was in this way that Herbert marked the place of the rough draft in some sequence of documents that he envisaged but which now eludes us. The fourth, and latest, layer is restricted to a single, small but important, element. The number 207 and the letter "v" (abbreviation for "verso") were written in pencil in the upper left-hand corner. Yet the hand working the pencil was no longer that of Herbert. It was, of course, the hand of the archivist from the Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library], to which, ten years after Herbert's death, the majority

of his papers were consigned. It is the custom of that institution to finely mark originals to indicate pagination.

Each of these layers confirms a different "moment" in the history of one and the same sheet of paper. The impersonal and automated identifying marks of the hospital confirm the moment when it was nothing more (but also nothing less) than a voucher, precious because it was exchangeable for a meal. Zbigniew Herbert's personalised, handwritten signature confirms the moment when the object's status changed and became the medium on which (in a sense: thanks to which) the poem was brought into being. The admittedly handwritten, but again impersonal, call number of the cultural institution also confirms that the sheet of paper (still the same one) should now be regarded as page two-hundred-and-seven, verso, in the folder with the reference number 17 877. In other words, the object is no longer a hospital voucher exchangeable for a dietetic meal (this original value of the page is now lost) or an extension of the poet's mind that supports or even stimulates the creative process (this secondary function has been deactivated), but rather an archival exhibit and an element in a collection of catalogued documents.

With this material object, which has changed its status and appearance over time, I attempt to think afresh and reimagine the phenomenon of the hospital, this specific Hôpital Saint-Louis in Paris and hospitals in general. One can think of hospitals in different ways: as places of suffering and places of relief from suffering, as places of death and as places of life, as knowledge-producing institutions and as institutions in which knowledge reveals its limitations and even its uselessness. As humanitarian institutions, but also as oppressive institutions hostile to human individuality. The document we are looking at tells us that a hospital can also be conceptualised as a setting in which texts are produced.

A text-making hospital. Hospitals issue medical recommendations for those being discharged, continuing treatment or convalescing at home (a medical recommendation is a text), hospitals issue death certificates (a death certificate is a text) and hospitals issue official statements to the media, for example when a case of dangerous infectious disease occurs or when a patient is a celebrity and their condition is of public interest (a statement to the media is a text). However, sometimes and for shorter and longer periods, writers and poets find themselves within the confines of a hospital in the capacity of patients or of medical staff, and they also produce their texts: poems, novels, plays, memoirs and so on. These two writing activities – one performed by an institution that cares for, or controls, individuals and one performed by individuals who are cared for, or controlled, by institutions – are essentially separate, disconnected, with different poetics, different channels of circulation and different purposes. But the archived item we are looking at gives us an insight into the moment when an unexpected connection occurred.

The Paris hospital must have printed dozens or hundreds of such vouchers on 23 June 1991, all of which functioned in the institution's internal communication

channels. They were intended to certify that a particular patient had received from the hospital kitchen the food appropriate for the treatment prescribed by a hospital doctor. One member of the hospital community, a Polish patient by the name of Herbert, acted unconventionally by using a document of internal communication (through which the institution communicated with itself) to create a message belonging to a different order: the order of Polish poetry.

To put it another way: the hospital's printed slip of paper, which became a rough draft and then later an archival deposit, speaks of a man who, though incorporated into the hospital's environs, administrative order and micro-community, refuses to be completely circumscribed by the role that this setting imposes on him. That is, he refuses to be reduced to the role of a patient. To convert a voucher stipulating the scope of a hospital diet into the manuscript of a poem can be interpreted precisely in this way: as transcending the role of patient and assuming (or maintaining) the creative role of the poet. And not so much in any confrontation with the hospital environment, in an act of dissent, rebellion or an attempt to achieve isolation from it, as in contact with it based on using and adapting its components and principles for his own purposes.

5. Ending

Each of the three documents we have looked at in this essay allows us to think of creative subjects who realise their creativity within certain environs and in interaction with the surroundings. The "environs" and "surroundings" mean something different here in each case:

- the sheet of paper itself (part of the material environs of objects), which proves to be an actant of genesis;
- the field of literary life which determines the creative subject, simultaneously stimulating and limiting their creativity;
- the hospital (understood simultaneously as a material space, an institution and a social situation), in which the creative subject strives to preserve their creativity.

The three exercises performed here, which I term exercises in looking and thinking, were intended to demonstrate in practice how the integration of three disciplines can occur: study of the materiality of the document, close reading of the text written on it, and sociological-anthropological reflection on embodied and situated creativity. I hope that these exercises have, at least to some extent, proved successful. That is, that they have allowed a bridge to be built, or at least the laying of a plank bridge, between genetic criticism and a broader discourse on the creative subject in their environs.

Translated from Polish to English by Mark Aldridge

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