

Summary

The Spectre of the “Cursed”

Writers in 20th- and 21st-century Culture

This volume resulted from a conference on the “cursed artist” in the series “Writers in 20th- and 21st-century Culture”, which was held in Poznań in 2016 as a continuation of deliberations on committed artists. In the Introduction, Grzegorz Pertek summarises the absence of this figure in literary theory discourse, and points out how this gap most likely stems from a fear of falling into biographical digressions loosely related to the scientific perspective of the description. The articles collected in this volume allow the reader to confront these fears, as well as offering new research perspectives.

Part One, which is titled *The Figure of the Cursed Poet. Artistic (De)Constructions*, brings together texts that seek to analyse this figure once more, and in doing so, check its relevance. Tomasz Kunz introduces an extremely important anthropological and sociological descriptive perspective: of particular significance is extending the socio-economic and psychological reading of this category (which allows the cultural background to be taken into consideration to a greater extent than would be possible from a purely existential frame of reference). Agnieszka Czyżak presents the work of Natchez as a case of creating a legend, while Jan Galant offers a portrait of Ośniałowski, a poet unsuited to contemporary times, distinct in generational, social and artistic terms, and draws attention to death by suicide as a gesture of discord with reality, which is so important to cursed artists. Separateness, distance and a quest for a unique artistic are all significant dimensions to Andrzej Sulima-Suryń, who is presented in Jerzy Borowczyk and Krzysztof Skibski’s text: his life was an act of existential creation cultivated by his environment. On the other hand, Jacek Nowakowski presents the paradoxical way in which Zdzisław Beksiński practised his own privacy, which allows his behaviour to be attributed to the “life-creation” repertoire.

He returns to this point of reference in Part Two of the book, entitled *The Dispute on Life-writing*. Borys Szumański and Dariusz Pachocki both deal with the phenomenon of Stachura. The former focuses on the need for a new reading of his work, which would allow biographical and antibiographical references in the process of constant movement to be combined. Dariusz Pachocki advocates the possibility to read Stachura’s diary to follow the powerful original trail (albeit “strewn” with the complications of his life).

In Part Three, *Towards Creation*, Piotr Pietrych presents Tadeusz Różewicz’s early work, showing the creativity of his poetic gestures. Tatiana Czernicka looks at Jadwiga Stańczakowa, drawing out the unity of art and life that was so important to this poetess, although in “spiritual” terms it refers to the “figure of the cursed poet”. A clearer reference to this figure can

be found in Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany's text on the presence of Rimbaud in the work of Piotr Matywiecki: this poet sought to combat his legend, at the same time making use of allusions to Verlaine. The power of the "cursed" figure thus proves to be constantly strong.

In the fourth and final part of the collection, *Cursed Life (and Art)*, Joanna Roszak's acquaints the reader with "cursedness" as a category in translation (for example, Białoszewski's German translations). Agnieszka Rydz uses the semantics of "cursedness" with regard to the problems of women presented in two unusual poems by Julia Hartwig. This engaged aspect of "being cursed" in a different form appears in Monika Brzóstowicz-Klajn's text on "life-editing" as a means of Giedroyc's existence. It only seems to us that we are dealing with distancing from "the figure of the cursed artist"; reading the poems of Przyboś, Agnieszka Kwiatkowska shows them as a negative point of reference on this poet. The negative sometimes affects us most powerfully.

Translated by Rob Pagett