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No. 110 10.4.93-10.7.93 or Polish Uncreative Writing
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Abstract
This article provides an overview of Polish digital literature, using the tools and vocabulary of uncreative writing put forward by American artist and theorist Kenneth Goldsmith. The analysis covers appropriation techniques, plagiarism types, and the thinkership of conceptual writing practices. The selected works use various media and explore diverse textual materialities, which depend on specific platforms, such as the MERA 300 minicomputer, the Wikipedia platform, or JavaScript. The pieces are described in terms of database studies in contemporary digital literature. Keywords: uncreative writing; conceptual writing; digital literature; Kenneth Goldsmith; appropriation.

Resumo
Este artigo apresenta uma visão geral da literatura digital polaca, recorrendo às ferramentas e ao vocabulário da escrita descriptiva ["uncreative writing"] apresentada pelo artista e teórico americano Kenneth Goldsmith. A análise aborda técnicas de apropiação e tipos de plágio, assim como os mecanismos de pensamento das práticas de escrita conceitual. As obras escolhidas usam diversos meios e materialidades textuais, dependentes de plataformas específicas, tais como o minicomputador MERA 300, a plataforma Wikipedia, ou JavaScript. As obras são descritas segundo a perspectiva dos estudos de base de dados na literatura digital contemporânea. Palavras-chave: escrita descriptiva; escrita conceitual; literatura digital; Kenneth Goldsmith; apropriação.
in a language he wanted to appreciate only through its sound. He described his method as follows: “it allows me to ‘sight’ language by stringing together words according to their audio and/or phonetic combinations” (1993: 1).

The point of departure for Goldsmith’s project involved gathering Polish newspapers, magazines, and pornography, and exploring these materials to find words, sentences, and expressions for a literary work. The project then developed, and Goldsmith gathered students working on a museum exhibition, who added phrases, sentences, and individual words to the collection. On the first day the Poles began with off-the-cuff statements, then moved on to expressing their relationships to the government, the pope, politics, solidarity etc. On the final day the statements largely became quite personal. As the author suggested in the title, the group process of collecting a textual database for the work continued from October 4th to 7th 1993.

The result of the experiment was a work containing 1,500 words in the Polish language, of which the author understood nothing. Based on these notes Goldsmith gave the work its final shape. He adopted the following principle: “I put the words and phrases into an alphabetic and syllabic order with the entries going from one syllable A to Z, then a semi-colon, then two syllables A to Z, then a semi-colon, then three syllables A to Z, etc., all the way up to 40 or 50 syllables” (1993: 1).

In these final words detailing the work’s construction, Goldsmith raises a most important issue, and one that would become decisive in the birth of the uncreative writing movement and the factors that have caused a flood of such writing in the digital age—above all the changes in approach to authorship and copyright laws in their broadest definition. This is one of Goldsmith’s first works (many bibliographies list it as his first text published in chapbook form) and a forerunner of the plagiarism strategies of which Goldsmith would later become a fierce proponent, and which came to occupy a regular place in his work. Teamwork and its effect on writing techniques in the digital age are a separate issue. Goldsmith even boasts that the people who donated words felt like co-authors of the piece. In an era of widespread textual remixing and creative commons the author stresses that he created a mutual ownership work, perhaps without an author or a proprietor. The process in which the work was created can thus be seen in terms of social categories (collective authorship, expression of the group of people who speak a particular language at a particular time).