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INCOMPATIBILITIES

The Possibility of Engagement in Contemporary Literary Theory

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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I declare that the following M.A. thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned.

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1: INTRODUCTION

To relate question of literature, or art in general, to any notion of engagement represents a number of problems. Probably the first is the problem, manifested in the development of the avant-garde, that engagement no matter how openly defined would nevertheless end in a subordination of art to politics, accompanied by politics usurping the right to define what is art. As Theda Shapiro in her account of the relation between politics and avant-garde art points out, at the beginning: "Many artists tacitly and somewhat naively assumed that, since art has been revolutionary before the Revolution, avant-garde artists would intuitively understand what was now needed and respond to the new economic and social situation."¹ However, this did not prove to be the case. To a certain surprise, the initial belief that "The fine phrase 'free, unpolitical art' is not meant for you"² has not lead to a natural and spontaneous co-operation of artists and politicians. Instead, the claim of art being necessarily part of politics in a very wide sense was soon seen to be seized by the increasingly bureaucratic apparatus pursuing "ideological needs of the moment,"³ only to be in the end transformed into a doctrine by the "1932 proclamation of 'socialist realism' as the only officially accepted art form."⁴ To relate literature to engagement thus resonates with objections to political dogmatism. Nevertheless, this work develops in a certain opposition to the "fine phrase" – to paraphrase Felixmüller – "free, unpolitical theory," i.e. to a concept of "objective interpretation." The claim that there is nothing apolitical about both theory and literature is not to be seen as confirming the an assumption that engaged reading is one of

¹ Theda Shapiro, *Painters and Politics: The European Avant-Garde and Society, 1900-1925* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing, 1976) 206.

² Conrad Felixmüller, cited in Shapiro, *Painters and Politics*, 204.

³ Shapiro, *Painters and Politics*, 207.

⁴ Shapiro, *Painters and Politics*, 208.

applying ready-made schemes formulated in advance and to a certain degree irrespective of art as such, as exemplified by criticism developed in communist countries, advocated by Jean-Paul Sartre and Georg Lukács.

To explore the possibility of engagement in literary theory is not to advocate a political dogmatism, whereby pre-established rules would be applied on a literary text in order to understand or explain the text. To explore the possibility of engaged reading is above all a question of how a literary text is constituted: with what objectives and what expectations. To avoid the dogmatic moment, first of all such approach to literature must be questioned that aims at explaining a literary text, no matter by which particular theory. This work, therefore, departs from the assumption, that there is more to literature than understanding it. Apart from dogmatism, which may be seen as the pitfall of theories of literature in general, there is a dilemma related to the questions of engagement, this time associated with critical theories or a certain meta-discourse of critique in general: “‘critical theory’ poses,” according to Louis Armand, “a serious dilemma for criticism as such, since [...] a number of its claims become immediately susceptible to the same reduction ad infinitum of all meta-critiques.”⁵ On a theoretical level, the question of engagement poses a problem, which may be generally referred to as *a critical paradox*: how does a critique eventually not become that which it criticised? How does a critique of hegemony not become a hegemony itself once its “truth” has been accepted and established as such?

This problem is at the same time a departure for considerations of a different approach. The question must be asked in structural terms, not empirical or historical. The question must be asked: is there some inherent critical potential in art, in literature or in

⁵ Louis Armand, “An Incomplete Project of Criticism?” *Solicitations: Essays on Criticism and Culture* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2005) 23.

textuality? Which is to say, is art critical not by historical circumstances (siding with this or that political opinion) but by its very nature? And where would that reside? And how could literary theory develop it? This work therefore attempts to search a certain principle of engagement. By this it is meant a certain structural possibility of engagement. Insofar as any attempt at understanding art as engaged will become dogmatic since it runs the risk of merely proving an already established, engagement itself must be explored as a *possibility*. Only thus may this risk be avoided, retaining at the same time reading as a genuine investigation. This work is therefore largely informed by exploring on theoretical grounds questions of possibility, questions of possibility as opposed to necessity, as well as questions raised by the relation between the possible and the actual.

A critique of any sort may be associated first of all with change or difference: differences provide grounds for critique, and differences are also “outcomes” of critique. Critique may thus be seen as always representing a certain *incompatibility*. The central issue of this work therefore is incompatibility or various incompatibilities. As a principle, it is the thesis of this work, that the very concept of incompatibility does, on a theoretical level, best capture the “site” for any discussions of engagement in literary theory. The reason is twofold: on the one hand, the very term incompatibility may be seen to denote not just a difference “within” a system, but a *fundamental* difference, one which is a matter of the very “systematicity” of a system, and therefore then any debate on the engagement – if engagement is seen as an attempt to point to something fundamental, crucial or very important – might also be centred around incompatibility, this applies to all critical theory and not only to literary theory. On the other hand, the term incompatibility is here seen to denote that, with which both the essence of literature (i.e. when the essence of literature or art in general is seen to reside in its radical difference from the everyday praxis, but also as

distinct from, for example, philosophy) as well as the critical or subversive power of art has been associated. It is not a task of this work to inquire into various particular incompatibilities and their critical potential, but it is the task of this work to inquire into the critical potential of incompatibility as such. That is, incompatibility as such (no matter of what to what) is seen as a possibility of critique and hence of engagement. This work will therefore not talk of various schools of art nor will it talk about various alternatives of political or politicised literary theory. This work will attempt to deal with engagement on the theoretical level and on the theoretical level engagement is seen as stemming out of incompatibility.

By engaged reading it is meant a reading that aims at dealing with fundamental issues. Insofar as on the theoretical level incompatibility is seen as fundamental, this work will therefore deal with incompatibility and with such reading that "aims" at incompatibility. By this it is meant a reading which does not attempt to *overcome* an incompatibility, but a reading which focuses on incompatibility: seeks it out, explores it, multiplies it. Or, in other words, *appreciates* incompatibility, in a similar way as, for example, Jacques Derrida's reading of Plato or of other philosophers or Jacques Lacan's reading of Sigmund Freud may be seen as appreciation of the analysed texts. By engaged reading it is meant a reading which focuses on incompatibilities, seeks the condition of the particular incompatibility and rather than explaining (or understanding) lets the incompatibility proliferate. The incompatibility may be treated to an effect opposite to what Ingarden proposes: not as a "blockage [that] must be overcome,"⁶ but as a crisis that must be multiplied. It is an assumption of the present work that something incompatible,

⁶ Roman Ingarden, *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968) 49, cited in Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) 55.

incompatibility as such already represents a critique of that with which the something is incompatible. This relation of incompatibility representing a critique could also be described in terms of Ernesto Laclau's key dichotomy of a hegemony and a particularity, where the existence of particularity always shakes the hegemony since at it questions its status *as* a hegemony.

Incompatibility implies two questions: how does it come about (and how is it possible) and how are incompatible terms (concepts) mediated between? The answer to both questions is seen to be in what has been termed *technē*: in various stages of this work it shall be specified variously, as *technē* of mediation, *technē* of translation or *technē* of creation. The very word *technē* denotes all these meanings, since *technē* is understood here as both a method of mediating and of creating. To render *technē* as a method, however, is imprecise. *Technē* is not technology, it is not an instrumental means of getting from an initial point to a conclusion. *Technē* rather could be described as a possibility of a certain technology or method. *Technē* denotes precisely the relation there exists between incompatibilities, a relation which is both mediation and creation.

By engaged reading it is therefore meant a reading which focuses on *technē*. On a *technē* of what? Here many problems can be seen to arise. It could be said "on a *technē* of incompatibility" poses further questions: "whose" incompatibility? The artworks in question or the reader's or of his discourse, "through" which he reads the work? In other words, is incompatibility something produced (along a certain *technē*) by the work and is thereby "in" the work, or is incompatibility something produced by the reader? In this context, however, *technē* is not a method applied as a constructive principle "in" the work and reconstructed later by the reader. Since this would reduce *technē* to simple method, it must rather be supposed that the *technē* of incompatibility is something both revealed and created by the

reader by the very process of reading, since, after all, the relation between a reader and a work may too be seen as an incompatibility of its own right. Thus, it is supposed in this work that reading already represents as certain *technē*, which is both productive of and founded upon incompatibility, and that such *technē* may too in return be proliferated. The *technē* of proliferating incompatibilities constitutive of a critical reading may be exemplified by Louis Armand's work with the texts of James Joyce in *Technē*.⁷

The consumption of art is seen here as an act of mediation, which is both reconstructive and constructive. In this relation there are at work a large number of knowledge: from strictly personal to matters of general discourse. In order to make reading engaged, such sorts of knowledge must not be excluded (by way of an imperative to interpret the work of art as it is, to identify its "objective" meaning, with the restriction of anything outside art) but must on the contrary be included. Of the inclusion it is however not expected to explain the work of art. Of the inclusion it is hoped that if it focuses on incompatibilities it will start dealing with fundamental matters. By way of a very simplified analogy, the consumption of art as engaged may be likened to the association method of psychoanalysis: throughout the consumption of a work of art certain elements of it activate certain elements of us, or, to be more precise, certain elements of us activate certain elements in it, or, to be more precise, the meeting of it and us converges – finds and creates – on certain elements. As much as the associative method proceeds to further question the particular association, its uniqueness, that is, its difference and its incompatibility with conscious thought, so may reading proceed to multiply the difference arrived at in the meeting with an artwork. Here chance is involved to a large degree. And, as the analogy is

⁷ Louis Armand, *Technē: James Joyce, Hypertext and Technology* (Prague: Karolinum, 2003).

designed to stress, by developing the chain of associations, fundamental things are arrived at.

To be engaged is to oppose any inevitability: inevitability deprives people of possibilities since everything is made to appear as determined. However, any discourse founded on inevitability forecloses any critical interventions, since the very concept of inevitability forecloses the possibility of critique. To be engaged presupposes as a condition that things not be inevitable or determined: in a determined order one cannot be engaged in any way, one may only be a part of a system, exercise the commands of the system. Insofar as inevitability is a linearity than engagement is a non-linearity, which must be explored along with the accompanying terms such as indeterminacy, possibility, chance and choice.

By *engagement* it is meant a critique, yet the word critique in the context of literary theory risks being mistaken for (literary) criticism, that is for a method for passing judgements on particular works of art. For the purpose of this work therefore the word engagement has been employed to distinguish this exploration from literary criticism. The word engagement is understood here in a very wide sense, not so much as a pursuit of a particular political view but rather as a position of being engaged and engaging oneself. It is understood very closely to getting involved. For this work, however, both engagement and involvement are understood rather in their inter-active connotations or connotations of mediation, of wedding one with the other, of introducing some Other into one's own fate. By engaged literary theory it is meant primarily such theoretical approach to reading literature which is based on abolishing or ignoring the division between literary and extra-literary.

Although by critique it is often meant simply to focus on someone else's errors or flaws in someone else's argument, critique may be seen as either a confrontation of different systems of truth with one another or as a critique of a system by way of pointing out its

hidden assumption (assumptions hidden to the critiqued system) and internal contradictions, which are taken to reveal the system to be something else than for what it has been taken (or for what it takes itself). Yet the mode of critique informing this work may be characterised as a critique by innovation or by the unexpected: every innovation represents an implied critique of the innovated, and every surprise (pleasant or not) represents an implied critique of our knowledge of the current situation. This, however, presupposes some prior *possibility* of innovation, possibility of change. The very possibility of something different is already an implied critique. On the one hand, this means that possibility itself is already a critique. On the other hand, this also means, that the question of critique is always a question of new information. And vice versa: every new information implies critique. This is to be understood more widely than an encounter of a hegemony with a particularity, of a centre with its periphery etc. Rather, every critique, or critical approach – critical theory – may be understood as a certain discursive engine productive not so much of critique but first of all of incompatibility.

By *theory* it is meant an investigation which does not aim into the past, i.e. to the author of the text, to the intention of the author, in other words, to the origin, but rather an investigation, which represents a certain forethrow, a certain speculation directed into the future. This is however accomplished by exploring a structure of possibility, that is, some prior structurality. Theory as a discursive engine works within this structurality. By *literary theory* it is meant both a theory of literature (and where differences permit it, of other arts as well) and a theory which *is* literary in the sense of poetic language, that is, a very broadly understood theoretical investigation which is informed by focus on language or on discourse, an investigation which proceeds by exploring words, terms or language and its functioning, a theory which does not use language but focuses on language. Poetic language

is not to be understood as a distinct “brand” of language, there exists no *substantial* difference between language and poetic language. Roman Jakobson defines the work of poetic language as matter of functions: “*The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.* Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence.”⁸ Poetic language is what *can happen* to language, as it were, at most, the difference may be defined by precisely different function or by different degree of intensity to which the possibility of poetic language (the function) is realised. However, this difference between language and poetic language is not important for literary criticism solely. What poetic experimentation with language represents is a possibility not to use language but to focus on language, experimental approach which, according to Armand, “obtains at the level of the possible, and in this sense the term ‘literature’ – as *writing* – designates an experimental condition of language itself.”⁹

Thus, what has been termed poetic language and has been associated primarily with literature points in a direction of a fundamental change of approach. To focus on language and its functioning, to focus – in extreme cases – on the materiality of the signifier, is by what a number of critical approaches may be defined. It is in these terms that Max Horkheimer defines critical theory. Focus on the functioning of language is what Ludwig Wittgenstein’s emphasis on grammar evokes, it may be seen to inform Michel Foucault’s explorations of the genealogy of discourse, it proved equally important for feminism. Focus on the function of words lies behind Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction as much as it has proved crucial for Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis.

⁸ Roman Jakobson, “The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles,” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 1265.

⁹ Louis Armand, “The Avant-Garde, Machines and Experimental Systems,” *Avant-Post*, ed. Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 16.

As the title of this work indicates, and as it was above attempted to be argued, engaged reading represents a structural *possibility*. That is, engaged reading represents a possibility and engaged reading as it is understood here is focused on possibilities, mainly possibilities that arise from critical moments, that is, moments of some kind of incompatibility. As representing a possibility, critical moments may, however, be blocked, be made invisible. The focus of this work is therefore primarily emphasising the importance of incompatibilities, on crisis, and this work attempts to do so by bringing together and exploring concepts from various discursive areas. In order to do so this work remains to a large degree abstract, at moments possibly even to a point of obscuring the relation of the explored to the overall theme. Since it is a basic premise of this study that there exists a vital relationship between possibility and engagement, critique, this work primarily stresses and explores the very *possibility* of engagement, and as such it addresses broader questions of structurality and “text” rather than particular structures of literary works.

2: READING

This chapter explores two different conceptions of what is it reading and along with this two conceptions of the nature of the text. Although the terms reading and interpretation are treated to a large degree synonymously here, primarily the word reading is used as it is seen to foreground the act, the process of reading, as opposed to interpretation, which as a term seems to be primarily connoting the result of reading, the “discovery” arrived at. In classical approaches to literary texts, such as structuralism, hermeneutics, reader-response theory etc., reading is understood as a preliminary activity, which must be abstracted from (and got rid of irrelevances) in order to arrive at an interpretation, which is conclusive and objective. If such conclusion, objectivity and abstraction may be rendered by a symbol, it would be a “1,” the aim of this chapter – never to go beyond reading – could be symbolised by Deleuze and Guattari’s “n – 1.” The main problem as it is seen here is that any reading aiming at interpretation implies in it an attempt to formulate rules of interpreting, which could be universally applicable and “reader-proof.” An engaged reading as characterised earlier cannot be made to conform to this. On the contrary, engaged reading is only possible if reading is not subjected to the imperative to interpret a given text with respect to some third element, such as the original intention or an overall meaning. Engaged reading requires an active role of the reader and it also requires *particular* readings. If interpretation is the domain of authorities and logical inevitability, reading is a domain of rebellion and the gratuitous. The statement of this chapter is that there is more to literature than just understanding it.

In the first part of the chapter, hypertext will be dealt with, yet it will not be dealt with as electronic writing, rather, hypertext is seen as such a concept of text, which

foregrounds precisely the qualities here associated with engaged reading. Hypertext as a category which on the one hand voices earlier theories of an open, de-centred text, and on the other links text, textuality and writing to technology. Here hypertext is opposed to text considered as an “object.” The concept of hypertext allows for reading to be thought of not as a process of discovering relevant and crucial aspects of a given text, but rather “relevant and crucial aspects” are taken to be means of orientation in the textual field, orientation which represents the strategy of classical interpretation – derived from unquestioned yet questionable premises – precisely to the degree of its being gratuitous, despite claims to the contrary.

The strategy of this strategy (of interpretation) is to rely on a third element, which is outside both the text and the reader, yet is believed to be *in* the text. A fundamental opposition between the inevitable and the susceptible to chance therefore informs the whole chapter. To some degree this is treated as a rhetoric figure deployed by various theoreticians, but most of all the opposition is taken to represent what is at stake: once process is in the centre of focus the question of whether it runs inevitably, automatically or whether it is to some degree accidental and prone to errors becomes crucial (as much as in the domain of the more traditional spatial metaphors of text as an object, it is boundaries that are at stake.) The second section explores writing rather than reading. It is included because its main occupation is with the question of the emergence of new information, a question relevant to both writing and reading as understood here. Importantly enough, new information is seen to arise without any third element. The next section proceeds to explore some paradoxes of the “objective” conception of interpretation and reading, paradoxes which directly bind such reading to Jacques Derrida’s critique of what came to be called phallogocentrism. Then the notion of the *pharmakon* as relevant for engaged reading is briefly explored. Reading is seen

as primarily a matter of syntaxing, of praxis, where things converge. In the last section, an alternative description of text and its position is analysed with the help of Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Text and reading are understood as plural without unity, “n – 1,” the task being further to widen gaps between differences and further to spread plurality.

1.

The process of reading has for decades been circumscribed as a metaphysics of understanding bound nevertheless to the materiality of the media. With the appearance of poststructuralist theory and of electronic media, new conditions forced a reconsideration of the nature of reading and interpretation. According to Louis Armand, “as long as “the text” was seen to be married to physical media, the majority of readers and writers took for granted three crucial attributes: that the text was linear, bounded and fixed. Generations of scholars have internalised these qualities as the rules of thought [...]. Nevertheless, these rules of thought have come under scrutiny [...] most recently in the form of post-structuralist theory and the advent of *hypertext*.”¹⁰

As this short quote makes clear, there are a number of issues that emerge once a conception of text has been changed. This chapter will explore issues concerning the conception of reading solicited by the transformation of a linear text into a hypertext. In the words of Roland Barthes: “Over against the traditional notion of *work*, for long – and still – conceived of in a, so to speak, Newtonian way, there is now the requirement of a new object,

¹⁰ Louis Armand, *Technē*, 34.

obtained by the sliding and overturning of former categories. That object is the *Text*.”¹¹ As far as Barthes’s concept of the *Text* – the metaphor of which is “that of the network”¹² – may be associated with the term hypertext, then linear text may be referred to as *work*.

2.

When hypertext appeared, most of the implications of a centreless text, which is seen to be composed of fragments spanning across diverse areas of inquiry, had already been explored by poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari or Roland Barthes under rubrics such as textuality, de-centred text, *écriture*, intertextuality and so on. In his book on hypertext, where many of these continuities are traced, George P. Landow stresses that, for example, “In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes describes an ideal textuality that precisely matches that which in computing has come to be called hypertext – text composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains, or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms *link*, *node*, *network*, *web* and *path*.”¹³ As a result, hypertext runs the risk of being welcomed not so much as a new concept but rather treated as a “mere” tool enabling an open-text to be actually performed, opening the possibility to “create text that is experienced as nonlinear,”¹⁴ here the hypertext is treated as a concept precisely to avoid such risk.

As a technology, no longer bound to a physically delimited object, hypertext may be considered as a new way of both writing (structuring the text) and reading. As a concept

¹¹ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977) 156.

¹² Barthes, “From Work to Text,” 161.

¹³ George P. Landow, *Hypertext 2.0* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1997) 3.

¹⁴ Landow, *Hypertext*, 4.

“overturning old categories,” it may be considered as both a certain liberation from the old categories and as a description more accurate with respect to the nature of textuality than the descriptions of (literary) text as a “self-identical” object of analysis – either an “emotive object” as in Wimsatt and Beardsley,¹⁵ or a “mental object,” as in Hirsch.¹⁶ Where such claims of an objective reading and “objective interpretation,” which is the title of Hirsch’s essay, are directed at a preliminary classification of genres, of contexts relevant for the interpretation or of “meanings” relevant (i.e. “objective”) as opposed to “meanings” irrelevant (for being too personal or too psychological), hypertext on the contrary has – according to Landow – the potential “To liberate us from the confinements of inadequate systems of classification.”¹⁷ Landow, quoting from Vannevar Bush’s essay on memex (the precursor of hypertext), even draws a parallel between the non-hierarchical associative principle that governs hypertext and cognitive functions of the brain. As Landow points out, “according to Bush, the main problem lay with what he termed ‘the matter of selection.’” Organising information “by tracing it down from subclass to subclass”¹⁸ not only does not suffice in times of the “growing mountain of research”¹⁹ but moreover, “The human mind does not work that way.”²⁰ Hypertext, or web in general, is on the contrary asserted much more truthfully to correspond to the actual functioning of human brain “by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain.”²¹ Although such association is probably problematic from neurological point of view, it illustrates well

¹⁵ William K. Wimsatt JR. and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy,” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 1402.

¹⁶ E. D. Hirsch JR., “Objective Interpretation,” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 1691.

¹⁷ Landow, *Hypertext*, 8.

¹⁸ Vannevar Bush, cited in Landow, *Hypertext*, 7.

¹⁹ Bush, cited in Landow, *Hypertext*, 7.

²⁰ Bush, cited in Landow, *Hypertext*, 7.

²¹ Bush, cited in Landow, *Hypertext*, 8.

the fact, that the concept of hypertext (more than Barthes's *Text*) denotes a certain *process* of functioning or operating, in which the reader is inscribed, and not so much an object or a *thing*, with which the reader is faced and which it is his task to analyse and to understand.

From another perspective, hypertext is seen as foregrounding individual choice in reading. The reader is thus "not locked into any kind of particular organisation or hierarchy."²² The reader's role is suddenly transformed into an active one, whereas with respect to a "classic text" the reader is "plunged into a kind of idleness."²³ In a hypertext environment, "you thus have read the readerly text in several ways not possible with a book: you have chosen your reading path, and since you, like all other readers, will choose an individualized path" and therefore reading, too, is individual. This may be seen as one aspect of a general capacity to blur various boundaries: hypertext "blurs the boundaries between reader and writer,"²⁴ "between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its consumer,"²⁵ or between "a text and other texts," giving thereby rise to an idea of some general *écriture*, which comprises all texts and even all culture in a certain "virtual" environment, comparable, for example, to Yuri Lotman's notion of "semiosphere."

The notions of centre and hierarchy of classification which hypertext is seen to defy have easily transformed the issue of hypertext into a political one or a liberating one. In general, the principle of choice on the one hand and the general availability on the other further provide grounds for considering the political implications of hypertext. Among these, hypertext does on the one hand serve as a certain *model* of democratic participation and on the other hand, hypertext as a technological prosthesis is also seen to have direct

²² Landow, *Hypertext*, 38.

²³ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, cited in Landow, *Hypertext*, 5.

²⁴ Landow, *Hypertext*, 5.

²⁵ Barthes, *S/Z*, cited in: Landow, *Hypertext*, 5.

political effects, "the technology [itself] is essentially democratizing and [...] it therefore supports some sort of decentralised, liberated existence."²⁶ Yet, these liberatory claims on behalf of hypertext still retain a dimension to them that may be called mimetic – hypertext is *like* mind, hypertext is *like* democracy. In order to surpass these historical and empirical evaluations, the focus shall be on the theoretical concepts hypertext solicits. With respect to reading and interpretation, what appears central is the question of selection among the various "nodes" of hypertext, that is, of means of selection which may be taken to represent a principle of orientation and of establishing relations in the network, or even of establishing the network by creating relations.

The question of selection – foregrounded by the network environment of hypertext – has been obscured as long as the materiality of the textual medium – the bounded book – allowed for treating text as such as fundamentally a "finished corpus of writing."²⁷ Regarded as "finished," the text (as a "work") may be metaphorically described as a box, which contains something, while it is the task of reading to reveal this something. The terms like essence of a literary work, or, in the words of Leslie Fiedler, the "absolute point," at which reading it is meant to arrive and by which reading is at the same time supposed to be informed, may be seen as manifestations of what Armand describes as a "desire to decipher:" "a desire to situate the meaning of the text in the materiality that is supposed to frame it."²⁸ Once the material support for such metaphors of containment is dispersed with, as it had been both by theoretical explorations of a structure as de-centred and by the appearance of an electronic network as the new textual medium, the notion of "essence" (as

²⁶ Landow, *Hypertext*, 31.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, cited in Armand, *Technē*, 42.

²⁸ Armand, *Technē*, 33.

a centre, intention, author, an "absolute point"²⁹ and so on) loses its ontological or metaphysical status. Its status may instead be seen as one of a discursive category. Apart from the physically limited book, the essentialist conception of text as a work is part of a larger theoretical structure of valorisation and hierarchisation, centred as it is according to Michel Foucault around "the author." In order to arrive at this structure, Foucault asks: "What is necessary to [the] composition [of a "work"], if a work is not something written by a person called an 'author'?"³⁰ The answer to this question resides in another question, namely: "what is an author?" For Foucault, the author does not represent an existing entity but rather a discursive category, which serves various purposes, for example, as a "means of classification," it "establishes different forms of relationships among texts,"³¹ etc. As such, the "author" is no longer a part of the text (contained *in* the "box") and neither is it the "figure who is outside [the text] and precedes it," much rather it represents a *function* of a discourse about texts, which is itself "regulated by the culture in which it circulates."³² To carry this argument further, the function of the "author" (the "author-function" in Foucault's terms) or the function of any sort of "essence" of a literary text, may thus be seen as an *ex post* theoretical reinforcement of the empirical assumption concerning the "finished" nature of the body of writing as it is represented by a book as a physical object.

Thus, to regard a text as a "work" no longer represents an ideology free description based on facts, but rather a discursive decision, which is already an act of a certain praxis of reading, a decision among decisions. In Armand's words, it "suggests the impossibility of

²⁹ Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature," *Collected Essays I* (New York: Stein and Day, 1970) 536.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) 1624.

³¹ Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 1627.

³² Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 1627.

situating an object of inquiry independently of the mode of inquiry itself.”³³ With respect to the question of a strategy of orientation in the field of textuality, that is with respect to the general question of selection, the function of the “author” may be seen to provide some mechanism of establishing a point of departure, some “centre,” with respect to which the information, absorbed through a consumption of a text, is to be selected among and which makes possible or conditions the construction of an interpretation. To rely on the concept, however, is already part of the very process of selection. Thus, Hirsch’s argument that “hermeneutics must stress a reconstruction of the author’s aims and attitudes in order to evolve guides and norms for constructing the meaning of his text,”³⁴ means nothing less than that hermeneutics must *first* stress author’s aims, and only thereby can it arrive at “correct” interpretation. Nevertheless, what this implicitly acknowledges is that the “correct” conclusion as to the meaning of the literary text is *conditioned*, that, in other words, the conclusion itself is already implied in the chosen method (or strategy) of reading.

If the two conceptions of the nature of text – a bounded, “finished” text containing a meaning, Barthes’s “work,” and hypertext, network or Barthes’s *Text* – are laid side by side, they may be seen to solicit (and presuppose, be conditioned by) fundamentally different scenarios of reading: on the one hand, text understood as “work” is read always with respect to something else, hypertext on the other hand is read by way of (immediate) connecting, linking and selecting. What differentiates the two options is whether a sequence of juxtaposed textual elements (letters, signs, sentences, textual units, texts) is treated *as* juxtaposition or whether some third element is called upon in order to provide a means of mediating between the juxtaposed elements and thereby to bridge the gap between them.

³³ Armand, *Technē*, 42.

³⁴ Hirsch, “Objective Interpretation,” 1695.

Insofar as this is precisely the function of some kind of a “centre”— the author, the name of the author, Father, intention etc. – the “absolute point” is to be seen as in fact representing a certain *tertium comparationis*, required by the “desire to decipher.” So long as reading is subjected to the demand to arrive at the third element, its nature is essentially static since its aim is static: it aims at arriving at a universal, stable conclusion. Without such demand, reading represents not an empirical process, whose duration stretches between the initial chaos and the final harmony, but an indeterminate process as a series of equally inconclusive events or encounters, where reading is forever taking place without ever having taken place. In both scenarios, reading is an activity of establishing relations and selecting relevant information. However, insofar as reading a text as a “work” ultimately aims at subjecting reading to the “absolute point,” a point, which affects an end of reading once the point has been arrived at, than the experience of reading a hypertext, that is, experience of reading as a (non-finite) process of selecting and linking may be regarded as *reading as such*, as reading as an intransitive verb. As noted above, the concept of hypertext does not denote any “object;” therefore, what has been referred to as process, process without the “one” represented by the *tertium comparationis*, may be reformulated as a *technē* of reading, “that accomplishes itself in running.”³⁵

3.

Before proceeding to further elaboration of the possibility of an engaged reading, it remains to explore some implications that may be derived from the subjection of reading to a certain *tertium comparationis*. These are basically twofold. Once two juxtaposed elements are rendered

³⁵ Jean-Michel Rabate, cited in Armand, *Technē*, 38.

as both being related to the same third element, as an effect their mutual relation no longer appears arbitrary (as, say, a chance meeting) but seems instead to assume a logical coherence. Which is to say that the relation between the elements and thereby also the very presence of the elements (in one work, in one sentence, etc) is rendered as arising out of (logical) necessity, out of a structuring law, which the middle ground helped the reader to reveal (as much as it is believed to have helped the author to create the same structure). The first implied term that accompanies interpretation “with respect to” is thus the notion of *inevitability*. The second implication, closely linked to the first, is one of *transparency* of the medium. With respect to the “absolute point” both ambiguity is supposed to vanish and also the “gaps” between words are expected to be meaningfully “filled”. The whole text becomes in this logic an expression of its central pivoting idea (or meaning), and once this pivot has been reconstructed, the expressions of the text correspond to it in what appears to be a symmetrical and transparent relation.

Both of these implied concepts are at odds with any possibility of an engaged reading as considered here since they assign the reader (and reading) with a task of an “invisible” service to the text. They transform the technē of reading into a particular technology of deduction or commentary. In his essay “The Text as a Process of Movement,”³⁶ Yuri Lotman, in order to describe a mechanism of the production of “new information,” sets out to explore and defy precisely the concepts of inevitability and symmetry, grounding creation instead in a certain randomness or chance. Although in Lotman’s essay it is in the context of writing, the mechanism he arrives at may be transposed to reading as understood here, since for Lotman, the creative “spark” (the emergence of new information) resides precisely in the

³⁶ Yuri Lotman, “The Text as a Process of Movement” *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, trans.?? (Indiana: Indiana UP, 2000).

impossibility fully to account for a relation between two elements, that is, with respect to creativity, he sees the lack of the middle ground not as an obstacle but as a condition.

For Lotman the oppositions at stake are opposition derived from the writing-speech binary, Lotman, however, stresses aspects important in the context of hypertext, when he transforms this binary into an opposition of the public and the private. The first half of Lotman's essay deals with text as mediating between common (public) and personal (private) memory, aspects of which are activated in the process of reading. The second part is a polemic against the idea of inevitability as formulated in a project of generative poetics (by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov) which departs from the assumption that:

The text is the *expressive* embodiment of the theme, and the structure of the text is like a *deduction* of T [text] from th [theme] [where] devices are 'contentless,' they heighten expressivity without altering the content. *The correspondence between the theme and the text* is a kind of *deduction of the text from the theme*, a deduction which is carried out on the basis of universal transformations, the devices of expressivity.³⁷

This somewhat Chomskian conception is, according to Lotman, based on an assumption, that: "There is a relationship of symmetry between theme and text." That is, there is a one to one correspondence between the content and the text, which allows for the content to be unproblematically translated into the text. Lotman opposes this position as an antiquated one, "according to which the literary text is treated as 'decorated'"³⁸ by setting it in opposition with his own conception of writing as a process oriented "to create a new

³⁷ Zholkovsky and Shcheglov, *Poetics of Expressivity*, cited in Lotman, "The Text as a Process of Movement," 72.

³⁸ Lotman, 72.

message in the course of the transmission,"³⁹ and he makes his point by analysing what might be called the hypertextual nature of the *avant-textes* of Dostoevsky's novels.

According to Lotman, a text is not a transubstantiated theme, rather "there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the first link in the chain is as a rule a symbol,"⁴⁰ "a capacious symbol with the potential to develop many images and interpretations, a symbol which is already literary."⁴¹ The moment when the "new message" emerges is the moment of choice, a moment of activation of some of the potentialities. For what the Dostoevsky's manuscripts make clear is, that his creation proceeded not from a beforehand determined plan but from a certain symbol, emotionally charged or abounding with implications. Dostoevsky's manuscripts, whose "page looks like a wall of a cell on which a prisoner has at different times scribbled his feverish jottings"⁴² thus represent what might be called a hypertext. As opposed to a text deduced with respect to a theme, for Lotman, Dostoevsky's "text in fact loses its linearity. It turns into a paradigmatic set of possible lines of development."⁴³

The actual writing is then seen to proceed by way of activation of only some of the "lines of possible development." In agreement with Lotman's thesis that "the generation of new meanings is always connected with asymmetrical structures,"⁴⁴ the creative act is precisely one of activation of only some – at the expense of others – potentials suggested by the symbols, "tossed on to the page" of Dostoevsky's notebooks in no apparent order. This activation happens when "Linearity takes the place of multi-dimensionality."⁴⁵

³⁹ Lotman, 68.

⁴⁰ Lotman, 73.

⁴¹ Lotman, 74.

⁴² Lotman, 74.

⁴³ Lotman, 75.

⁴⁴ Lotman, 74.

⁴⁵ Lotman, 76.

Such processes are, as Lotman points out, irreversible: it is impossible, on the basis of the resulting text, to reconstruct the original idea, since a “symbol may determine a cluster of possible plot developments, but it cannot determine which one of them will be chosen.”⁴⁶ For Lotman, this hypertextual activation of a linkage, which creates the text, “involves asymmetrical mechanisms” and, by virtue of the irreversibility of the process, “must involve elements of randomness and unpredictability.”⁴⁷ The creative process is, therefore, connected to unpredictability and chance *by definition*. That is, chance is always already present not as an addition but as a condition of the transmission and at the same time any notion of a definitive text, “fixed forever,” is for ever postponed, transforming Dostoevsky’s novels into what “seems [to be] a single draft distributed over the sequence of the different stages of his writing,”⁴⁸ always waiting for realisation of yet another potential activation and transformed with every activation.

Thus, contrary to the assumption of the generative poetics, Lotman assumes that not only does not creation proceed by a expressing a theme by its transformation into a text, but neither does it proceed by a “mere” articulation of a symbol. Creation is much rather seen as “an act of translation,” which takes place “on the boundary between different semiotic regimes”⁴⁹ – multi-dimensionality and linearity – where “relationships of asymmetry and untranslatability come into being.”⁵⁰ The new information is seen to emerge in the very process of translation between two incompatible systems. Due to their incompatibility, the translation cannot be regarded as either transparent or inevitable: it is always to a large degree unpredictable or gratuitous. The incompatibility between the two systems represents

⁴⁶ Lotman, 76.

⁴⁷ Lotman, 74.

⁴⁸ Lotman, 77.

⁴⁹ Lotman, 77.

⁵⁰ Lotman, 74.

an ultimate difference in the process of whose overcoming “new meanings” are caused rather than discovered.

Lotman’s description of writing as an activation of potential meanings suggested by an over-determined symbol and the subsequent translation between two incompatible systems may by an extension be seen to capture also the technē of reading. The choice among possibilities, (which is at the same time a chance) so central to the concept of hypertext is situated precisely on the verge between the public and the private, between which reading may be seen as mediating by a non-linear series of events. Reading thus no longer seems to be a dialogue between two speakers the aim of which is to arrive at a certain certain middle ground or final conclusion. In fact, in terms of the mediation between the public and the private, the finality of any “absolute point” may be seen to involve the politically problematic notions of consensus and concession. As Jurgen Habermas’s conception of consensus suggests, consensus is arrived at by strength of argument and is thereby linked not only to reasoning but also to the distribution of power. In a similar vein, Hirsch argues, that coherence of interpretation itself does not suffice, and it is implied in his argument, that only an authority of some sorts is capable of retaining the “sense of the whole” which makes it possible to tell the right interpretation from the wrong one: despite his reading being justified, the student is often “wrong because he has misconstrued the context or sense of the whole. in this respect, the student’s hardheadedness is not different from that of all self-convinced interpreters.”⁵¹ Any notion of a transparency or inevitability may be seen as always tied to an exercise of power and authority. The situation may be seen as pervaded by a dilemma between “knowledge and interest,” which may be characterised with Habermas

⁵¹ Hirsch, “Objective Interpretation,” 1704.

(although there it is in a different context) by a certain maxim, that “What is called rationalisation on [the everyday] level is called ideology at the level of collective action.”⁵²

5.

Nevertheless, when Lotman himself talks of reading, the importance and creative nature of translation no longer applies: reading is seen as a “passing from text to the intention.”⁵³ In fact, Lotman’s description of reading relies on the traditional apprehension of reading as a dialogue – “A text behaves like a partner in dialogue”⁵⁴ – which in its implications contradicts his treatise on writing, since it describes reading as a deciphering or deducing of a content expressed in the text by the writer and his intention. Lotman’s conception of reading takes us directly back to such a conception of text, that again falls back on the authority of a *tertium comparationis* and which treats the text as a mere ‘decorated’ addition to the “living truth.”

Theoretical accounts arguing for the central importance of the concept of intention (“the living voice”) may be seen to give rise to a number of paradoxes. These are essentially structured around a metaphoric personification of the text on the one hand (which is most readily manifested by the phrase that “the text *says* something”) and along an axis represented by the spatial opposition of “within” and “without” on the other hand. Both principles are, however, interlinked, as the image of something like an “internal scribe” – an image of an acting figure within our head, a figure, who directs the process of reading and

⁵² Jurgen Habermas, “Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective,” *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) 311.

⁵³ Lotman, “The Text as a Process of Movement,” 78.

⁵⁴ Lotman, “The Text as a Process of Movement,” 80.

understanding – demonstrates. As a mimetic conception of delegated intention (agency), the “internal scribe,” gives rise to paradoxes visible in Plato’s account of recognising one’s ideas: “A painter who comes after the writer and paints in the soul pictures of these assertions that we make.” Although Plato asserts that we “see in ourselves pictures or images,”⁵⁵ one would have to ask, who sees the pictures the painter paints in our soul? Thus the idea of intention gives rise to an infinite number of ever smaller men within our soul (or somewhere within our body, where the soul too is presumably *located*) passing the information further and further from one to another, apparently without end since “I” cannot be located as a last small “reader” within “my” soul.

In this context, it is important to note that a similar metaphor is sometimes used not only to describe certain “essence” of agency and of (mental) activity within the individual, but it may also be transposed into concepts such as society or history. By virtue of their personification, history or society may themselves be ascribed an agency or will of their own. Of various groups within the society it may then also be said that they are participating in a dialogue (which may sometimes become a war).

In either case, analogue conception of a series of events as a certain dialogue gives rise to infinite substitutions of a never ending chain of personifying re-presentations – since any such analogous image of an “internal scribe” requires in turn another “internal scribe” to read what the former one has written and write it again in order to pass on the information. Yet, where mental processes are concerned, small “I”s cannot be expected to actually *be* in the brain (or anywhere else in the body) and the same must be assumed to apply to

⁵⁵ Plato, *Philebus*, cited in Jacques Derrida, “The Double Session,” *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 175.

“internal” paintings: as Armand puts it “there are no images in brain.”⁵⁶ By extension it may be stated that – contrary to Lotman’s assumption⁵⁷ – there are no images *in* the text. The unwillingness to acknowledge this simple fact is what gives rise to various problematic attempts to establish in general what is in text and what is without text. This gives rise to a series of questions, that classical interpretation takes it to be its task to answer: how much of the actual psychology of the author is present in the text and is it relevant for interpretation or does it only pretend to be relevant? how much of readers’ personal associations is relevant for interpretation? what contexts clarify the meaning of the text and can therefore be regarded as being within the text and what contexts are on the contrary too distant and only obscure the meaning of the text? etc. This, however, only gives rise to an ever growing refinement and multiplication of various concepts. As Derrida characterises a similar confusion in a different context: “Bad ambiguity is thus opposed to good ambiguity, a deceitful intention to a mere appearance.”⁵⁸

Apart from paradoxes of “internal scribes” and “internal readers”, arguing for a central position of intention also means to treat text as a transparent medium, which in turn once again provides ground for false hierarchisations and valorisations already witnessed with respect to “work.” According to Derrida:

A span of writing is worth nothing in itself; it is neither good nor bad, neither true nor false. [...] The book, which copies, reproduces, imitates living discourse, is worth only as much as that discourse is worth. It can be worth less, to the extent that it is bereft of the

⁵⁶ Louis Armand, “Mechanistics, Grammar & the Locality of Thought,” *Literate Technologies: Language, Cognition & Technology* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 25.

⁵⁷ Lotman, “The Text as a Process of Movement,” 63.

⁵⁸ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” *Dissemination*, 103.

life of logos; it can't be worth more. In this way, writing *in general* is interpreted as an imitation, a duplicate of the living voice or present *logos*.⁵⁹

To invoke the intention of a text is also to bind the text to its origin, whereby the text becomes something like a son to the author, or in short, it is to invoke what has been subjected to various modes of critique as a phallogocentric discourse. Only thus is the text seen to attain its "proper" position: "the origin of logos is *its father*. [...] Without his father, he would be nothing but, in fact, writing." As if intention were the tool to avoid the "specificity of writing [which] would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father" thereby "achieving emancipation with complacent self-sufficiency"⁶⁰ In this fully paternal model, reading and understanding is presided over, or supervised by, the intention, which is at the same time considered to be naturally in the text, as if by the virtue of it. To ground reading in intention thus helps to translate reading into what is an "archaeological narrative," a story of uncovering necessity and law. Fully in agreement with natural processes, a reading is thus rendered as an objective operation of establishing rules that are already present in the text. The "innate" value of art is thus in fact a value of intention, a hard wire connection between the writer/intention and text, which in its turn goes hand in hand with a rhetoric of inevitability and necessity: art is valued for that for which it must be valued, otherwise writing on its own would become an arbitrary copy, the *mere* double without a referent, a proliferation "which [in this logic] must be contained like madness."⁶¹

Instead of containing such proliferation, engaged reading may be seen to focus on it.

By way of a convergence of the hypertextual network of relations without a clear centre and

⁵⁹ Derrida, "The Double Session," *Dissemination*, 185.

⁶⁰ Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," 77.

⁶¹ Derrida, "The Double Session," 187.

the idea of generating new information by translation between the potential and the actual as described in Lotman, the *technē* of reading may be seen to give rise to an engaged reading. This would be constituted by a refusal to interpret incompatibilities with respect to some third, transcendental or metaphoric principle. Instead of such “bridging the gaps” as it were, engaged reading would on the contrary be constituted by spreading incompatibilities, proliferating difference and thus by being creative in its own right. That, however, presupposes a different approach to text and textual elements – a certain fragmentation accompanied with a focus on the fragments as fragments or as “capacious symbols.” This may be seen to be captured by the concept of hypertext of which Derrida’s “maxim” that everything may be put into quotation marks may be seen as a specific application in the context of binary oppositions.

Thus, what Derrida does in his text entitled “Plato’s Pharmacy” may be seen as exemplar in many respects. In his text, Derrida questions the imperative to “contain” the proliferating double. In order to do so, Derrida refuses to take the terms of binary oppositions at face value. Violating thus what may be regarded as the intention of the text that Derrida reads, each of the opposing terms is questioned with respect to a structural logic, which underlies them. The terms are thereby extracted from the “original” intention, they are put into quotation marks as it were, and revealed as mutually conditioned. For Derrida, this points to the very stucturality of a structure:

In order for these contrary values (good/evil, true/false, essence/appearance, inside/outside) to be in opposition, each of the terms must be simply *external* to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition. And one of

the elements of the system (of the series) must also stand as the very possibility of systematicity or seriality in general [that is in terms of] “*opposition* as such.”⁶²

This “*opposition* as such” may be associated with the irreducible ambiguity represented by *pharmakon*, which is both a remedy and a poison at the same time: “There is no such thing as a harmless remedy.”⁶³ It is precisely this contradiction “within” the *pharmakon*, which both pervades Plato’s texts and at the same time structures the same text: it was the attempt to contain these contradictions that may be seen to have provided the creative impetus for Plato. As Derrida puts it, “It was precisely this ambiguity that Plato [...] attempts to master, to dominate by inserting its definition into simple, clear-cut oppositions.”⁶⁴ In order to do this, “Plato had to make his tale conform to structural laws. The most general of these, those that govern and articulate the oppositions speech/writing, life/death [...] point to the internal, structural necessity which alone has made possible such communication.”⁶⁵ This structural necessity is, however, itself due to the ambiguity of the *pharmakon*, the ambiguity of which makes any structure possible, in other words, as Derrida asserts, it is “something like the *pharmakon* – or writing – far from being governed by these oppositions, opens up their very possibility without letting itself be comprehended by them.”⁶⁶

Derrida is only able to point this out by again *deploying* the *pharmakon*, by spreading its indeterminacy and inflicting it into all oppositions structuring Plato’s text – by searching its traces in Plato’s “clear-cut oppositions”. If a comparison of Derrida’s reading and some more traditional concept of interpretation were to be attempted, the two alternatives may be

⁶² Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 103.

⁶³ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 99.

⁶⁴ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 103.

⁶⁵ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 85.

⁶⁶ Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” 103.

distinguished as centred and de-centred: traditional interpretation focuses on what one writes *about* and tries thereby to establish a single uniting notion of a given text, whereas Derrida's reading focuses on *what happens* when one writes about something, what must happen in order to write. In this Derrida focuses on the general method or *technē* of writing, which is only partially under control of the single central notion, i.e. the meaning of the text, intention or author's original intention. Derrida himself formulates this in a series of questions: "Plato can not see the links [Derrida has traced] and yet these links go on working of themselves. In spite of him? thanks to him? in *his* text? *outside* his text?"⁶⁷

With respect to what has been mentioned earlier, the transformation Derrida makes reading undergo may be formulated as the following question: If the text or the "new message" somehow emerges only in the process of translation, that is, if the new message does not refer anywhere else – and the text instead only mimes itself, as it were – may, then, this "miming" actually be in any way reflected (or mimed) in reading itself? In other words, is such reading possible that would not aim at the traditional assertion of an "absolute point"? Insofar as this assertion is captured by Lotman's thesis that text and its reading aim at "one 'great word' with one single meaning,"⁶⁸ the alternative reading would on the contrary have to aim at difference and multiplicity. And here is where engagement in reading, engaged reading, reading engaged in the events of the text finds its locus.

In order to demonstrate what differentiates reading as aiming at the "absolute point" and reading as a process of multiplying differences, two conceptions of the nature of misunderstanding or undecidability shall be juxtaposed. Lotman in the end of his essay "The Text as a Process of Movement," stresses that not only understanding but also not-

⁶⁷ Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," 96.

⁶⁸ Lotman, "Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation," *Universe of the Mind*, 47.

understanding is crucial for reading. His conception of reading, however, does not – contrary to his conception of writing – leave space for such misunderstanding. It may only be stated (“We should not, however, forget that not only understanding but also misunderstanding is necessary”⁶⁹), but not argued, that is, with respect to the logic of the rest of his essay this “we should” remains arbitrary, and as a result misunderstanding is made to appear as addition which does not really have to be there. For as long as it is taken for granted that “The text aims to become one ‘great word’ with one single meaning,”⁷⁰ misunderstanding cannot be accounted for: with such an objective, misunderstanding must be overcome.

Quite differently, for Derrida, misunderstanding is closely linked to undecidability, which may in certain respects be understood as yet another manifestation of the asymmetrical and irreversible choice of activation involved in writing. Importantly, misunderstanding is thus linked to the *praxis* of reading not as an accident which happens in a “self-convinced” interpretation, but as a structural aspect of the *praxis* itself, which is – again – akin to the ambiguity conditioning any structurality, encountered “within” the *pharmakon*. As Derrida points out: “‘Undecidability’ is not caused here by some enigmatic equivocality, some inexhaustible ambivalence of a word in a ‘natural’ language [...] What counts here is not the lexical richness [...] What counts here is the formal or syntactical *praxis* that composes and decomposes it.”⁷¹ To reflect this *praxis* of reading in an actual reading, rather than attempting to “master it,” represents a fundamental change. Such reading no longer is determinate, cannot be hoped to arrive at some final true conclusion and yet by tracing the traces constitutive of a text, traces which embed the text in a wider context of

⁶⁹ Lotman, “The Text as a Process of Movement,” 80.

⁷⁰ Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 47.

⁷¹ Derrida, “The Double Session,” 220.

language or “culture”, such reading is engaged with or involved with a “beyond of beingness”:

The operation, which no longer belongs to the system of truth, does not manifest, produce, or unveil any presence; nor does it constitute any conformity, resemblance, or adequation between a presence and a representation. And yet this operation is not a unified entity but the manifold play of a scene that, illustrating nothing – neither word nor deed – beyond itself, illustrates nothing. Nothing but the many-faceted multiplicity of a lustre which itself is nothing beyond its own fragmented light. [...] This mark points, alludes without breaking the glass, to the beyond of beingness.⁷²

The reader’s activity, may thus be described in terms of the concept introduced by Claude Levi-Strauss as a bricoleur reading since reading makes use of what is there, what is at hand, it is a “manifold” operation performed upon a field of possibilities, field of possible relations. Thus, faced with the variously charged “symbols,” reading becomes an operation of connecting, a *syntax*, which produces both links *and* undecidability.

6.

The suspended or mediated position of a written text, of a text as “a medium (medium in the sense of middle, neither/nor, what is between extremes, and medium in the sense of element, ether, matrix, means),”⁷³ as membrane between the “internal scribe” and the “I”, a scene *where* nothing happens, artwork is no more than a scene where a potential “operation” might

⁷² Derrida, “The Double Session,” 208.

⁷³ Derrida, “The Double Session,” 211.

take place: an interface of the possible. For Derrida, such interface of the possible is rendered by hymen. Suggestive of a fictitious action, one that takes place in the mind, "nothing happens and the hymen remains suspended *entre*"⁷⁴ The autonomy of a work of art (its difference from the extra-literary) is undermined, as "the syntactical composition and decomposition of a sign renders this alternative between internal and external inoperative."⁷⁵ Thus conceived, the text has no intention behind it, it remains sheer surface: breaking the mirror does not help and neither will help cutting through the canvas as Lucio Fontana's "painting" *Cuts on canvas* clearly demonstrates. Neither understanding, nor misunderstanding is an attribute of the work, which is why cutting the canvas is beside the point: there is only the wall upon which it hangs behind it. As Derrida points out, "We are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing; faced, so to speak, with a double that doubles no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself a already double."⁷⁶ It imitates nothing and it also contains nothing.

In between hierarchies and experience, (or between "knowledge and interest" to echo Habermas's key concept) autonomy of the book is lost. Instead the book becomes part of both hierarchies and experience, it becomes involved in both. This may be described by the concept of rhizome introduced by Deleuze and Guattari: "the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world."⁷⁷ In between various strategic tensions and variously intensive lines, no longer a stable self-contained object, text:

⁷⁴ Derrida, "The Double Session," 216.

⁷⁵ Derrida, "The Double Session," 221.

⁷⁶ Derrida, "The Double Session," 206.

⁷⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 11.

constitutes an assemblage [...] and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity – but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of a substantive. [...] causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity[...] Here, as elsewhere, the units of measure are what is essential: *quantify reading*.⁷⁸

Words themselves thus become overdetermined, symbols, each word containing the whole of language, in one text, all tradition may be seen. Such overdetermination, however, is not a product of an author's intention. As Deleuze and Guattari further assume "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made."⁷⁹ To attempt to distinguish the two options, the "presumed possibility" as Derrida denotes this, "of a discourse about what is, the deciding and decidable *logos* of or about the *on* (being-present),"⁸⁰ or in other words, the urge to see only the "meaning", the allegedly true meaning of a text is a desperate effort to forget or mask the traces, the lines of intensities and of force, which make us see a meaning as a meaning, a text as a text in the first place. With the loss of inevitability as well as of the secure referent to be unveiled as a *tertium comparationis*, the question as to what guiding or orienting principle in this overabundance of intensities of sense bordering often on pure quantity of reading, may be seen to shift from detached interpreting to involved (engaged) multiplying.

This proliferation, precisely the one that is best "kept contained like madness," is due to the loss of any central, essential mimetic notion. Deleuze and Guattari symbolise this by n-

⁷⁸ Deleuze, Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

⁷⁹ Deleuze, Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

⁸⁰ Derrida, "The Double Session," 191.

1: without Father, without secure referent, without intention. Insofar as they assume that “there is no mother tongue, only a power take over by a dominant language” multiplication at $n-1$ dimension represents a critique of any domination. It is in this that the possibility of an engaged reading opens up, as a reading that first of all multiplies. As Deleuze and Guattari allege: “The multiple *must be made* [...]. Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted, write at $n - 1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome.”⁸¹

7.

Hypertext may be seen as that to which traditional literary criticism opposes. This alone makes hypertext in a way engaged in the sense of being critical. Yet, the point of hypertext resides precisely in the fact that it blurs distinction and that it in consequence renders a conception of reading as “objective” impossible. Hypertext may be applied to describe the actual reading process, which happens by association with or without intention, yet without intention something else may become the guiding principle. This does not make such proliferating reading automatically engaged, it however opens possibility to it, a possibility which has always been here. Contrary to a reading aiming at a one, hypertextual reading aims at that which is before the one, it aims at more and in this movement it is free to incorporate anything at hand. Since anything at hand always already is part of reading. The first step in exploring the possibility of an engaged reading: no longer a dialectics aiming at conclusion reading is a device of undecidability, thus it is critical or producing incompatibilities upon which it is always already founded.

⁸¹ Deleuze, Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6.

The reader is not confronted with an object, the reader is already inscribed in hypertext. The reader's task is not to treasure the innate intention of a work of art, the reader has the option to question and explore the structural necessities by which (his) reading is informed – either in conforming to them or in violating them. The moment of literary theory becoming engaged or critical is when it ceases to believe that its aim is to tell truth about an essence of a particular work of art and starts instead multiplying the critical moments of the reading process. In this, the theory may be seen to double or mime the operation of the given text. This would mean not to stop reading at some definitive “correct” point but to spread reading like a virus.

3: TEXT

1.

This chapter sets out to explore a relation between what is termed “literature” and what is termed “reality,” which is a relation crucial to any exploration into the possibility of an engaged literary theory. This chapter will depart from an assumption that both “literature” and “reality” are two entities standing side by side, and by inquiring into various paradoxes or ambiguities of such rendering it will try to re-establish the relation in terms of something like a *technē* of relating, that is, as a certain process. The relation to the reality will here be taken to denote a relation to something fundamental, something which conditions the existence of both literature, reading and the subject. This chapter will therefore be informed by an inquiry into something fundamental. This again seems crucial from the perspective of an engaged reading: the inquiry into literature will be understood as pointing in the direction of fundamental concepts. Above all, this chapter is an attempt to account for an opposition between the possible and the realised, between the automatic and the arbitrary, between instrumentality and cause. It is this very opposition that is believed to express the relation of literature to reality or better this very opposition is believed to *be* the relation (as the *technē* of relating).

This chapter is informed by a thesis that text or textuality represent a certain fundamental experience or basic condition. In some respects, this chapter is a further inquiry into the relation between a field of possibilities and an actualised linkage. As a mechanism of mediating between these two, the *technē* of reading has been seen to proceed by a practice of translation, which, however, is always also a practice of a certain deformation, whereby

translation loses claims to transparency and becomes “creative” or generative. This chapter will therefore be informed by the relation of *technē* to *poiesis*, by relation between a praxis and a structure of possibility, a mediation between which is seen to be accomplished by linguistic devices traditionally associated with rhetoric or with poetic language – metaphor and metonymy. Insofar as text is understood as a manifestation which both reveals and creates the prior structure of possibility, as a manifestation of something otherwise beyond grasp, yet conditioning the existence of the very text, text and textuality will also be explored in terms of the relation between the conscious and the unconscious, which is also seen as mediated (as far as it is possible) by the linguistic devices of metaphor and metonymy. Text and textuality are not regarded here as either a depiction of these fundamental relations, or as a metaphor for them. Rather, they are taken as another manifestation of some underlying structurality common to both the constitution of the subject and of a text.

In the first section the chapter departs from a question fundamental to all inquiries into engagement, that is from the question about the relation of a literary text (or art in general) to the “reality”. It is precisely the task of this chapter to establish, what the word “reality” could mean in this context, as such the very word “reality” will throughout the chapter either gather meanings or be replaced by other words. It is already clear now that the “reality” must represent a possibility: in any other case, it would amount to a return to the objectifying conception of text (rendering a text as an entity by virtue of seeing the reality as an entity or object). If, however, a text points in the direction of textuality as its possibility and this in turn points in the direction of yet more fundamental structure of possibility, reading multiplying the differences in a text as well as multiplying the textual mechanisms of the given text (of any given text) may be expected to arrive at important things.

Structuralism in literary theory, in order to better approach the “true” nature of a work of art, committed itself to the task of freeing a work of art and equally the reception of art of everything extra-artistic. Thus, what had to give way were readings based alternately on the author’s biography and on the critic’s impressions and conceptions, both of which are dependent on transcendental notions. These attempts found their theoretical grounding in the concept of aesthetic (poetic) function. Aesthetic function denotes a mode of reference which is seen to remain after all reference to the text’s “outside” has been removed: the mode is self-reference. Nevertheless, this reshaping of an aesthetic paradigm did not put an end to ambiguities and puzzles troubling the literary theoreticians: some problems may have perished, new ones have emerged; the majority, however, only re-surfaced in a different constellation. Illustrative in this respect may be the question of the author. While the relevance of various miscellanies from the author’s life lost their validity for structuralist theory, the structural role of the author as an agency, proved to be a central theoretical issue. But this also illustrates the nature of the change in theoretical thinking: what began to emerge were not problems with establishing relevant facts that are to lead one to the final conclusions. Neither was it simply a shift from treating a work of art as a message to treating it as a structure, instead, what started to emerge was the question of structurality itself.

The effect of the aesthetic function is, based on Mukařovský, what may be termed a twofold reference: in a work of art, each individual sign retains its usual referent while at the same it is said to acquire some other referent, this latter being a product of the particular structure of the work of art. As a result, the work of art itself is understood as a sign: “The prevalence of the aesthetic function transforms the object or the act, upon which it makes

itself felt, into an autonomous sign.”⁸² When the question of the reference of this sign – the work of art – is posed, Mukařovský assumes that the work of art as a sign refers to the “reality as a such:” with art, Mukařovský associates a “claim to refer to reality as a whole and to express and to invoke a relation of man to entirety”⁸³ This, however, is not to be understood in mimetic terms as a *depiction* of the world, for this claim applies equally to music as well, that is, it applies even “when [artwork] does not depict anything at all.”⁸⁴ The question which will inform this chapter is: how could this be possible? What can the word “reality” be taken to mean? Before the question is actually approached, there remains a number of issues to be dealt with. To begin with, three things may be said of this reference. On the one hand, this reference to the “reality” pertains to the value of art, since it provides the reader with what is considered a priceless experience (of the reality). On the other hand, this reference comes as a surprise: it is conveyed by none of the particular details of the work of art, yet the whole of it would be distorted with an omission of even a single of these details. The reference thus cannot be located, it is everywhere and nowhere, emerging as it were against all expectations, as if *despite* the restrictions posed by individual signs, despite the usual reference of language.

Nevertheless, the crucial problem seems to be not only with the reference to the “reality” but already with the concept of self-reference. The problem with reference to itself, which is taken to define the language of a work of art, is precisely the *it-self*, since it suggests a certain object. But it cannot be supposed that poetic language would be an object of any sort. Thus, in order to makes sense of this *it-self*, it may be taken to foreground the very

⁸² Jan Mukařovský, “Umění,” *Studie I*, eds. Jan Červenka a Milan Jankovič (Brno: Host, 2000) 185. Translations mine.

⁸³ Mukařovský, “Význam estetiky,” *Studie I*, 66.

⁸⁴ Mukařovský, “Význam estetiky,” 66.

signifying process of language: if signs in a work of art acquire their reference in the process of reading, than reading may be understood as an experience of the process of establishing referents. As a result, when it is said of poetic language to refer to itself, "to refer" may be understood as an intransitive verb: instead a *language referring to something* the aesthetic function describes only a language referring or a *referring language*. Such "referring as an intransitive verb" (to echo Barthes's phrase⁸⁵) would not refer to *something* but it refers only to its referentiality, to the operation of signification. Since, however, all language is a referring language, the effect of the aesthetic function may be seen in exposing some fundamental nature of language, not referents but a structure of referentiality itself.

These considerations suggest, that the relation of the work to the "reality" must be thought of on structural grounds: either the structure of art produces an effect similar to "reality" (or to the effects of "reality"), or that its structure somehow corresponds to the structure of the "reality". Both of these options would, however, still retain mimetic (as a certain correspondence) quality, no matter how abstract. What remains is to consider this relation on the grounds of some structure common to both "reality" and art, that is such in which both art and "reality" would be already implied, whereby both are – by way of a metonymy – included not only in a common structure of their possibility, but also in each other.

⁸⁵ Roland Barthes, "Writing as an Intransitive Verb," *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1972) 134-145.

In order to specify this possibility, a number of questions are to be explored. The first is the opposition of the "internal" and the "external". Grounds for dispensing with this opposition or proceeding from it to something more fundamental shall be provided by analysing a text by Yuri Lotman, entitled "The Text as Process of Movement", for Lotman's conception of language is similar to Mukařovský's and falls back on similar oppositions (oppositions to be overcome here). The problem of the opposition of internal – external as such, will be analysed with respect to language, reference and "new meaning:" In contrast to Mukařovský, for whom the relation of a work of art to "reality" is an external relation, that is, for him the artwork relates to something which is external to it, the present exploration has so far – by hypothesising a structure of possibility – rendered the relation rather as an internal one, a relation of mutual inclusion. In order to carry these explorations further, Yuri Lotman's distinguishing between two modes of communication – internal (which he terms transmission) and external – shall be inquired into. Lotman, who does not explore these oppositions but employs them without a second thought shall help us reveal other aspects and other conflicts masked behind the opposition. For Lotman:

A model of perfect transmission is the chain of biochemical impulses which regulate the physiological processes *within* a single organism. In this case the final link in the chain of transforming impulses is the recipient. And in a well-constructed chain this will be a passive checking mechanism, valuable for its 'transparency,' for the fact that it adds nothing 'of its own' to the information. [...] But signs become necessary when the

circulation of information *within* an organism is replaced by communication *between* organisms.⁸⁶

This *between* is also the source of the “potential for distortion and errors, and with them [...] the appearance of new messages.”⁸⁷ However, formulated in this way, the opposition between of the *within* – *without* begs two questions. The first is whether: it really is true that the transmission within an organism is or even could be “perfect.” For in fact, the case seems to be that on the contrary even internal “transmission” is in fact a communication, since even internal “transmission” must be prone to the emergence of “new messages” – as for example allergies seem to suggest, which are an abnormal, over-protective and thus formally *erroneous* reaction, or as the learning capacity of the immune system suggests. For how else could for example genetic combinations and mutation take place, if they, too, were not prone to “distortions and errors”? This already evokes the second question, which will inform the latter part of this chapter, whether there in fact may not be supposed some general structure of communication or “language” underwriting the functioning of communication both within and without an organism? For Lotman’s account does in the end fall back on the traditional opposition between the body and the mind – transmission within the body is opposed to communication between minds – and hence the question therefore is as to whether there might not in fact be some underwriting structure of possibility conceivable, which would be common to both?

At the same time, the opposition of the internal – external is also rendered as one of automatic or purely instrumental functioning, on the one hand, and the arbitrary and

⁸⁶ Lotman, “The Text as Process of Movement,” 68.

⁸⁷ Lotman, “The Text as Process of Movement,” 68.

problematic communication, on the other, and may – as Lotman himself does it in his distinctions of *two intentions* – be seen not only to distinguish signs from organisms (i.e. “transmission” from “communication”), but also two possibilities of communication itself, as either aiming at “mere” passing and accepting information (for which Lotman again uses the term transmission) or as a communication aiming at “creation.” These two Lotman’s options or two intentions are reminiscent of Mukařovský’s concept of functions – a language may be made to fulfil various functions – and thus the opposition between language directed at transmission and language directed at the production of new information may be likened to Mukařovský’s opposition between communicative (practical) function and aesthetic function. Importantly, the convergence of concepts implied in Mukařovský with concepts implied in Lotman allows the present elaboration to proceed. The convergence allows for an introduction of concepts here associated with Lotman into the present elaboration of the relation of a work of art to “reality:” concepts which make it possible to link art (and its creative impulse) to the emergence of new information, and thus to link it to an “imperfect” communication, or – on the basis of what was elaborated earlier – to a translation between two incompatible systems or – as shall be elaborated later – to various meaning generating mechanisms.

It has already been noted, that for Lotman an act of translation between two incompatible systems is bound to creation to such a degree that the emergence of new meanings came to be seen as conditioned by such translation: the process of mediating between incompatibilities has been seen as creativity itself. In another essay – “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation” – Lotman further elaborates this mechanism of mediation as in fact a condition of *thinking* as such. Lotman departs from a thesis, that “A

minimal thinking apparatus must include at least two differently constructed systems to exchange the information they each have worked out.”⁸⁸

In the essay it is presented as an incompatibility between two media of representation, which Lotman locates as the difference between the two hemispheres of the brain:

The one operates as a discrete system of coding and forms texts which come together like linear chains of linked segments. In this system the basic bearer of meaning is the segment [...] In the second system the text is primary, being the bearer of the basic meaning. This text is not discrete but continuous. Its meaning is organised neither in a linear nor in a temporal sequence [...] (the canvas of a picture, the space of a stage, of a screen [...] or of a dream).⁸⁹

These “two types of text-generator” or data processors – discrete and continuous – may be seen as representing different types of communication: the verbal and the visual, the electronic and the printed, the digital and the analogue, or they may, as Lotman makes clear, be taken to represent the basic mechanisms of metonymy and metaphor. The “exchange” between these two diverse “generators” “takes form of a semantic translation,” yet since there is not a relationship of equivalence between them, it is a “translation [which] is in principle impossible.”⁹⁰ At the same time it is precisely in these attempts at an “impossible translation,” that “the results are most valuable.”

⁸⁸ Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 36.

⁸⁹ Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 36.

⁹⁰ Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 37.

Such “impossible” translation, whose nature Lotman captures by such terms as montage, collage or juxtaposition, can only be achieved by rhetoric tropes. “Tropes are not,” according to Lotman, “external ornaments [...] – they constitute the essence of creative thinking,”⁹¹ which, as he points out, applies to poetry and science alike. The incompatibility, which gives rise both to the need of translation and to its “impossibility,” is not to be regarded as overcome by the translation: “we must emphasise that in every instance the substitute and what it replaces are not equivalent [...] but on the contrary inconsummerable.”⁹² And this is where the generation of new information, of creativity, is to be sought: the resulting correspondence, which “verges on the irrational,” “is in principle new and paradoxical,” whereby the translation between the two generators is itself a generator. And by the same logic, the figures of metaphor and metonymy may too be regarded as generative: they may be taken to describe a technology or *technē* of mediation, which both translates and generates.

Thus the relation between art and “reality” may be seen as based in a certain incompatibility which, however, conditions (creative) thinking. The reference of a work of art to the “reality as such” is a reference uniquely associated with the aesthetic function. Insofar as aesthetic function may be tied into Lotman’s argument as the non-automatic, i.e. creative type of communication, then the unique reference to a “reality as such” is to be sought in some kind of an fundamental incompatibility and the *technē* of a meditation this incompatibility solicits.

⁹¹ Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 37.

⁹² Lotman, “Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation,” 41.

In order further to elaborate the relations between the *technē* of translation and the *poiesis* of new information, and also to further elaborate the incompatibilities as a relation between the possible and the actual, arguments from Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" will be drawn upon. The reason for introducing Heidegger is that in his treatise Heidegger links art to technology and both to *technē*. For Heidegger it is a *technē* of *uncovering* and the result of the uncovering he sees to be something creative. The *technē* of uncovering and the *technē* of mediating could be linked. Heidegger further allows for concepts of cause and of disposability to be introduced into the present exploration. For Heidegger, that, from which creation arises by way of uncovering some of its possibilities, must already be in a state of readiness – which could be linked to the idea of a "capacious symbol", out of which creation arises, as *charged* (with implications or emotions). And a second point: for Heidegger, uncovering is not a matter of instrumentality (that is, a certain transparent or simply logic-driven mechanism of deduction) but it is caused – which again allows a connection to be established with earlier accounts of what Lotman termed the "irreversible process," whose results cannot be deduced.

Heidegger uncovers the essence of technology to reside in a *technē*, which is generative, a *poiesis*. The answer to the question how is a new thing brought forth or created, implies a mechanism of mediation, which for Heidegger derives from the an opposition between the concealed and the un-concealed – which may be understood as an opposition between the potential and the actual – and is closely linked to Heidegger's conception of truth:

Bringing-forth propriates only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [das Entbergen]. The Greeks have the word *aletheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say "truth" and usually understand it as the correctness of an representation.⁹³

The term *Bestand* – "standing-reserve" – which Heidegger uses to denote this kind of potentiality or disposability on the side of the "concealed" (a disposability thanks to which the concealed may be realised as a potential for creation and thereby brought into unconcealment), covers in part characteristics that Mukařovský associated with the aesthetic function in that it redirects a look differently to paying attention to details and the particulars of a thing, which are inquisitively scrutinised, thus blocking or escaping a mere un-reflected *use* of the thing, whereby it escapes the instrumentality of the everyday, which directs the look to the whole which is merely used as an instrument.

The essence of technology, according to Heidegger, resides in the act of uncovering, of which instrumentality (functionality, ends-fulfillment) is a subcategory. This "uncovering" however is intimately linked to causality and causing, in that something is *caused* to be uncovered. The very term "cause," however, denotes for Heidegger also a "responsibility" which is linked to this sort of "occasioning," and he treats these terms to a large degree synonymously. After summing the four *causas* listed by Aristotle, Heidegger asks: "What is the source of the unity of the four causes?"⁹⁴

⁹³ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 317-18.

⁹⁴ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 316.

The four ways of being responsible [of causing] bring something into appearance. They let it come forth into presencing [An-wesen]. They set it free to that place and so start it on its way, namely, into its complete arrival. The principal characteristic of being responsible is this starting something on its way into arrival. It is in the sense of such a starting something on its way into arrival that being responsible is an occasioning or an inducing to go forward [Ver-an-lassen]. On the basis of a look at what the Greeks experienced in being responsible, in *aitia*, we now give this verb “to occasion” a more inclusive meaning, so that it now is the name for the essence of causality thought as the Greeks thought it.⁹⁵

Technology thus becomes “a way of revealing.” For Heidegger this is also what the very word – technology – denotes: “*Technikon* means that which belongs to *technē*.” However, “*technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*; *technē* is something *poietic*.”⁹⁶

The mediation or translation as explored earlier, is thus poietic not only due to the fundamental incompatibility and the subsequent approximation, it is also poietic in the sense of a certain uncovering or activation: it causes something to emerge, something which was already there as the “concealed” or implied or “capacious” – or which was already *possible*. This transition from the possible to the actual is accomplished by a transformation or deformation (the four causes), whose result, however, “can,” according to Heidegger, “look

⁹⁵ Heidegger, 316-17.

⁹⁶ Heidegger, 318.

and turn out now one way and now another,"⁹⁷ i.e., the result of meditation and of uncovering is unpredictable.

A condition of the unconcealment, however, is that the matter be at disposal: in order for something to be unconcealed it must somehow be a "standing-reserve." Heidegger captures this state of readiness as *Bestand*. To consider something to be at disposal, as a *Bestand*, may already be seen as the first act of the *technē* of transformation. That is, the poietic (the creative) is superseded by the aesthetic (the look that plans or intuits the future creation or its possibility) as both its condition and its first deed: something must first be seen as potentially giving itself to unconcealment. This is linked to what might be termed a de-automatisation, an extraction from the chain of logical (or natural) consequences: things must thus be perceived as *Bestand* in order to allow their extracting from a law and subsequent reinstallation into the general technological circumstances so, as to start causing effects: a river's flow must be stopped and re-directed in order to produce electricity, but the possibility of transforming of a river into electricity must first be seen.

Heidegger's description of effect characterising *Bestand* – that of seeing a thing in every detail, seeing it as such – is identical with Mukařovský's description of the effect of aesthetic function as paying attention to every detail of a given object, all of which are crucial yet none of which suffices on its own. The essence in either case resides in cause, not in instrumentality. Most clearly, the similarity can be seen between, on the one hand, uncovering as putting something to use as something else, which, for Heidegger, presupposes the state of readiness of being thus put to different use and, on the other hand, the avant-garde concept of ready-mades or found objects. These techniques also put

⁹⁷ Heidegger, 319.

something to a different (aesthetic) use and they also presuppose the certain readiness of objects to become aesthetic objects.

Thus the relation Mukařovský claims to be between an artwork and the “reality” as such may be posited in that an artwork points in the direction of the standing-reserve. The relation between a work of art and the “reality” as whole appears in this context not only as pointing in the direction of the hidden conditions (of disposability) but also as a operational similarity of decomposing and recomposing, an activity experienced also by the recipient during consumption of a work of art. Thus the aesthetic object points precisely to that which Heidegger elaborates in his essay: disposability is a condition (of uncovering, i.e. of technology and truth alike), but it is also a fate that cannot be avoided (anything may be transformed into *Bestand*, anything might be subjected to uncovering). This echoes a notion which Armand, paraphrasing Derrida, formulates as “every signified is always already a signifier.”⁹⁸ The disposability referred to by the term *Bestand* indicates a fundamental possibility that anything might be put to use, and this applies to language and discourse as well: anything may become a discursive category. *Bestand* thus denotes a certain fundamental structural possibility, one which is realised by the *technē* of uncovering or relating (between the possible and the actual). The relation of art to “reality” is vested precisely in *technē*, whereby a fundamental structural possibility is revealed or uncovered, though not by a depiction, but as a certain intervention into the possible. In other words, what Heidegger describes as *Bestand* may be seen to apply equally to technology and art alike, as much as it points to the essence of technology, to *technē*, which, however, is a characteristics of technology exceeding the realm of simply machines and engines in that it describes the essence of a kind of human condition. To relate *Bestand* to art as well means

⁹⁸ Louis Armand, “Literate Technologies & the Science of Man,” *Literate Technologies*, 10.

also to relate art to the same human condition, which exceeds the realm of simply novels and poems. To render art in these terms is to render art in engaged terms: it is to participate in fundamental conditions.

4.

The *technē* of revealing or uncovering, of which Heidegger talks, is, however, linked to a general condition, a certain drive to uncover. In the case of technology, this is a matter of what Heidegger terms *Gestell*, which he likened to “fate” or “deal”, whose characteristic is that it not only enables a technological “progress” but demands the progress by way of an imperative or command that everything be in a state of preparedness, that everything be ready for the demand of technology – things and man alike. This *Gestell*, or discourse, however, remains to a large degree unknown or unreflected by those who actually affect its progress, it remains *unconscious*. Thus, a particular technology or technological device and its very existence may be interpreted as a manifestation of *Bestand*, a state of readiness out of which the device has arisen, and the particular device may also be seen as a manifestation of a general discourse, which commands its invention and manufacturing. This is *Gestell*. This section, however, does not wish further to inquire into the *Gestell* as Heidegger defines it.

This section will inquire into the unconscious. An engaged reading of a literary text is such reading, which focuses not so much on the outcome of the process of signification of a given text (i.e. on a “meaning” of a text), but it is reading which focuses rather on the assumptions that are at work in the process of signification of the given text. In the theoretical exploration that is attempted here, the question is not so much of the assumptions themselves (various approaches would stress or reveal various assumptions, feminism

patriarchal, Marxism capitalist, for example) but the question is, what unites all various assumptions? Under what rubric could assumption as such, assumption as a concept, be rendered? And at the same time the question is, due to what are assumptions possible in the first place? The term seen as an answer here is the term of the unconscious. For unlike the term assumptions, which implies an already formulated structure, the unconscious rather implies a possibility of a structure, it implies a field of possibilities.

To invoke unconscious is neither to talk of the reader's or the author's psyche nor is it simply used as a metaphor. The unconscious is treated as a concept, which denotes a certain condition that by definition remains hidden or concealed. The unconscious cannot be made conscious, but it can under certain circumstances make its entry into the consciousness but only in the form of what *can* be conscious: dreams, malapropisms, malfunctions or other "psychopathologies of the everyday." Such critical moments represent a critique of the notion of a self-sustained (Cartesian) ego, precisely in that they manifest the existence of something conditioning the existence of the ego: the ego cannot be self-sustained since it is conditioned. The notion of the unconscious represents one of the most (if not *the*) critical concepts which have ever emerged.

To invoke the unconscious in the context of literary text is not to suggest that literature is (represents) an unconscious, either social (what the society suppresses, what enable the existence of the society) or the reader's. Since the unconscious cannot be made conscious, the question arises as to how they relate, as to what is the mechanism of mediation between the two. Jacques Lacan assumes two mechanisms, based on Freud's analysis of dreams: metaphor and metonymy, condensation and displacement. To put it bluntly, the unconscious "speaks by" metaphor and metonymy. Much rather, however, the two figures are a *technē* of mediation between two radically incompatible yet mutually

conditioned areas. The question in the context of literary theory is, what function do figures have (or could be seen to have) in a literary text? For the language of a literary text (the poetic language), at least with respect to the everyday use of language, is a deformed language. The very aesthetic function, by which literature (and art) has been seen to be defined is a certain malfunction, its function is nothing but itself.

This gives rise to the idea that literature is itself critical, by nature, by its very existence. Metaphor, metonymy, as well as various modes of deformation may be regarded as a site of an Other, of, to put it bluntly, "something else speaking." And it is precisely this possibility that something else may be speaking which lies at the bottom of most of what is usually understood as *critique*: it is precisely this idea which is echoed in uncovering hidden assumptions, for to uncover assumptions is to uncover that the system whose assumptions have been uncovered is not self-sustained, but is in fact conditioned by something else, and it is this something else that drives the system.

In this context, *cause* as associated with art, creative (generative) translation or poiesis earlier on, assumes a critical potential. A system (any system) could be said to function by law and is also sustained by law, insofar as law (in both its natural and legal meanings) designates control based on determinacy, control based in a transparent correspondence or identity with a "single principle" which determinacy presupposes; the system itself or its emergence may, however, be regarded as caused. Cause represents (hidden) assumptions, a fundamental arbitrariness or "gap" at the origin. For Lacan:

Cause is to be distinguished from that which is determinate in a chain, in other words the *law*. There is a single principle. One does not go without the other. [...] There is no gap here.

Whenever we speak of cause, on the other hand, there is always something anti-conceptual, something indefinite. [...] In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work.⁹⁹

As already noted, cause has been seen as that which is responsible for creation, since the very act of activation of one possibility and not another cannot be deduced from the result, it remains indefinite. Lacan, however, associates cause also with something paralysing: it is something "anti-conceptual" and it "does not work." How could creation be anti-conceptual? And could moreover in this paralysing effect some further critical essence be seen?

Cause is anti-conceptual first in opposition to *law*. That is, where law represents a certain "smooth run", an automated and inevitable functioning, there cause represents a certain Other to this kind of instrumentality, it represents a certain impasse or block. In opposition to law, which allows only for *that* to happen, which *must* happen, and that thus operates in the field of necessity or inevitability, cause as a certain *an-archy* denotes that, which has happened but needn't have happened or could have happened differently. It is the very possibility of the unpredictable or the indefinite (associated with cause) which questions the certainty of any law. However, cause is also *anti-conceptual* in that it is unaccountable for, that it defies *concepts*. As Lacan points out, in Kant's text "An Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Quantities into Philosophy," concerned with cause "it is more or less stated that cause is a concept that, in the last resort, is unanalysable – impossible

⁹⁹ Jacques Lacan, "The Freudian Unconscious and Ours," *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (London: Vintage, 1998) 22.

to understand by reason – if indeed the rule of reason, the *Vernunftsregel*, is always some *Vergleichung*, or equivalent.”¹⁰⁰

Literature, or poetic language, seems to belong to the order of cause not only in the indeducibility of the act of creation, but also the very term aesthetic function shares characteristics of cause. For aesthetic function, as already noted, may be regarded as a mal-function: it does only refer to itself. In this – especially in contrast to other, communicative functions, whose task it is to transmit thoughts by words supposedly without alterations – it is anti-conceptual and gratuitous. And again, the critical moment resides not so much in the actual artwork as much, as it resides in the very possibility of language to which the artwork points by its very existence, that is, that it *is* possible to mal-function or to be put to use by some other function, by some Other. As Lacan points out:

For what this structure of the signifying chain discloses is the possibility I have, precisely in so far as I have this language in common with other subjects, that is to say, in so far as it exists as a language, to use it in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says. This function of speech is more worth pointing out than that of “disguising the thought” [...].¹⁰¹

To signify “something quite other” is to violate a law on the one hand, yet on the other hand, it is to point to a fundamental possibility which conditions any signification, that is, the condition of the law. Therefore, the possibility to “signify something other”, on the one hand, *and* poiesis, creation, i.e. poetic language, on the other hand, may be seen to share what

¹⁰⁰ Lacan, 21.

¹⁰¹ Jacques Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,” *Ecrits*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W.Norton, 1977) 155.

might be termed the locus of origin, although origin is not the best word here. They may be seen as a product of the same *technē* of mediation, of the “imperfect” translation, cause, or of “unconcealment.”

Of the effect of such “other signification” it has been said that it is paralysing. The effect of aesthetic function too may be regarded as paralysing, precisely in that it draws attention to itself, to language as a media or to an object in all its details. The aesthetic function is always ready to produce a “loss” of straightforward meaning in that it disobeys the “law.” As, for example, in the case of the display of Marcel Duchamp’s “Fountain:” once the gaze is directed by what is termed the aesthetic function, the usual function of a particular object is effaced and focus is turned to the very particulars of a thing. As a result, instead of urinating, one starts observing the urinal. This is not to say that one could not actually use Duchamp’s “Fountain”, rather it is to point out the different regard an object or a sign acquires due to the *technē* of aesthetic function: it cannot be urinated into and regarded as art at the same time, since the activity of urinating would thereby no longer be a mere emptying oneself and would instead become a certain (aesthetic, political, gratuitous, provocative etc.) statement. At the same time, by this the aesthetic signification gives rise to (causes) chains of an altogether different signification, hitherto impossible.

This is how Lacan’s “doesn’t work” may be understood. And further, in his essay “What is a Picture?” Lacan introduces the paralysing effect to the “evil eye.” The incompatibility or gap between the recipient and the artwork is, according to Lacan, akin to a “strange temporality” which, for him, is constitutive of a painting, art. This temporality

resides in a gesture: a “terminal moment,” “which makes the subject pale before an image of a completeness closed upon itself”¹⁰²:

There, that by which the original temporality in which the relation to the other is situated as distinct is here, in the scopic dimension, that of the terminal moment. That which in the identificatory dialectic of the signifier and the spoken will be projected forward as haste, is here, on the contrary, the end, that which, at the outset of any new intelligence, will be called the moment of seeing.¹⁰³

This terminated movement is complete (“closed upon itself”) not logically, it is not an exhausted dialectic or an accomplished law. Rather, the termination is caused. Its completeness is akin to temporality, to a certain materiality of the creative gesture: as in cast dice, it is a matter of chance, “not choice”¹⁰⁴ – a chance reminiscent of the unpredictability yet definiteness Heidegger associated with cause or “occasioning” as well when he said that its results may “look and turn out now one way and now another.” Lacan himself, by way of an example of this kind of termination, asks: “If a bird were to paint would it not paint by letting fall its feathers?”¹⁰⁵

Not the structurality of the unconscious but the unconscious structure is where the structural relation between a work and reality is to be sought. Poetic language, the *technē* of poiesis, both reveals and creates. It reveals or rather makes manifest precisely by evoking a paralysing effect. This effect represents on the one hand a fundamental incompatibility between poetic language and the language of communication (or what language of

¹⁰² Lacan, “What Is a Picture?” *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 116.

¹⁰³ Lacan, “What Is a Picture?” 114.

¹⁰⁴ Lacan, “What Is a Picture?” 114.

¹⁰⁵ Lacan, “What Is a Picture?” 114.

communication is taken to be), an incompatibility between law and cause, between the conscious and the unconscious, an incompatibility which nevertheless conditions the existence of either. On the other hand, this effect manifests precisely the possibility of either law or cause. To say that art refers to "reality" is not to be understood that it refers to some material object (the globe) but instead it may be taken to refer to the field of possibilities: "A text," according to Armand, "operates always within the field of 'the Other.'" ¹⁰⁶ And in this it is creative: for possibilities represent not only past possibilities ("origins") but also a certain "future possibility."¹⁰⁷ By way of an avant-garde forethrow, art may be seen to both reveal and explore. By displacement, by saying something other, art embodies the fundamental possibility of an Other, of further replacement or re-signification, a possibility blocked by any discourse constructed around notions of its own inevitability or auto-motion – of which it therefore becomes critical.

5.

The "incompatibility of consciousness,"¹⁰⁸ the mediation between the conscious and the unconscious, however, poses further questions with regards to representation, one of the questions which are the basis of Armand's *Literate Technologies*, namely the dilemma of the literal and the figural meaning of language.

The analogical or analogous tendency to imagine such things as consciousness, mind or intention is deeply imbedded in the structure or grammar of language. In fact, the grammar is powerful to such a degree, that when it comes to considerations of intelligence

¹⁰⁶ Louis Armand, *Technē*, 42.

¹⁰⁷ Louis Armand, "The Judgement of Praxis," *Solicitations*, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Armand, "Mechanistics, Grammar & the Locality of Thought," *Literate Technologies*, 26.

and the possibility of artificial intelligence, it is most of all the grammar of language rather than a theoretical or technological impossibility which forecloses the possibility of “machine” intelligence. Since, strictly speaking, machines cannot be said to think simply because that combination of words does not work in language, “the sentence,” as Wittgenstein puts it, “‘A machine thinks (perceives, wishes)’: seems somehow nonsensical.”¹⁰⁹ Such thinking by analogy, or “analogical reasoning,” which is characteristically founded upon an assumption of transparency (“that sense experiences are directly translatable by way of cognitive experience, which are in turn communicated by way of purely instrumental system of signs”¹¹⁰) gives rise to certain problematic notions, such as the *reduction ad absurdum* encountered in the idea of an “internal scribe” earlier on, or obscuring the relation of consciousness to the unconscious (or of “the mind” to an “I”) as a “Cartesian homunculus, [who] thinks our thoughts in advance of us,”¹¹¹ that is, as a certain *deus ex machina*.

The unconscious is to be taken as a figure only “as a first step to move away from Cartesianism and the conventional mind-body problem, towards a mechanical or “materialist” understanding of reflexivity.”¹¹² In order to undertake this, “grammar,” as a “particular type of semantic *condition*”¹¹³ must be reconceived. Freud’s implied likening of the unconscious and a “lake on the Tyrrhenian coast at Cumae” that is the gateway to the underworld, and a demand that what “lies below this [...] lake [...] remain in the realm of the purely speculative” is, according to Armand:

¹⁰⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, cited in Armand, 27.

¹¹⁰ Armand, 21.

¹¹¹ Armand, 20.

¹¹² Armand, 23.

¹¹³ Armand, 29.

another way of saying that there is *nothing in the lake* – meaning no-thing that could be recognisable, no-thing for which “consciousness” possesses any analogue whatsoever. It is for this reason that the dreamwork is described tropically – as a set of structural relations of metaphor and metonymy – and not substantively.¹¹⁴

The analogous or analogue reasoning may in fact only be taken as far as the retina, which is “the last stage in of visual perception at which there is anything like an ‘image’ in the straightforward way that there is an image on a cinema screen.”¹¹⁵ The subsequent “sense data” are incompatible both with this projected image and with consciousness (as far as there remains the idea of an *image* of consciousness):

This incompatibility has been likened to the distinction between analogue and digital processes familiar in computing, and it is relatively uncontroversial to state on this basis that there are no images in the brain.

In effect, the incompatibility of consciousness with the operations of the brain, or between the analogue state of “consciousness” and the digital state of “mental processes,” means that it is nonsensical to speak of an image of thought, as it were.¹¹⁶

In other words, thought – as a mental process – cannot by definition be in any way imagined, that is, thought is not “recognisable in imagistic or analogue terms.” Such incompatibility does, however, give rise – as much as other incompatibilities already explored – to a mediating mechanism. It is here, in a gap productive of solicitory of a *technē* of mediation, that the consciousness may be located as a certain interface:

¹¹⁴ Armand, 29.

¹¹⁵ Armand, 30.

¹¹⁶ Armand, 30.

A phenomenon of consciousness, rather, may be considered as arising from a mechanical reflexivity that operates a point of transmission between analogue and non-analogue modes: it is what might be called an integrational effect that in turn is re-integrated into the machine as a notional reflexivity.¹¹⁷

Consciousness, thought, may thus be regarded as no-thing, but as *technē* as such. There is nothing mimetic in the *technē* of figures. They do not create an image of consciousness, they are how consciousness is.

These are all questions that a text and even more so a literary text poses. They all, however, amount to one fundamental question: What is literacy? What is a text? What is reading? The most important things seem to be “located” on the verges of incompatibility. The crisis this implies will be the theme of the last chapter.

¹¹⁷ Armand, 31.

4: CRISIS

This chapter aims at exploring the notion of crisis. By crisis it is meant a certain block, impasse, moment of uncertainty. Although the main focus is on crisis of reading, the very term crisis is treated here as a general concept. For the purpose of clarifying the importance of the notion of crisis for engaged reading crisis may be described as a moment when questions hitherto unseen impose themselves, as a moment which forces serious reconsiderations: crisis marks the advent or the possibility of critique. This chapter will therefore again be informed by the opposition between the automatic (unproblematic, smooth) and the arbitrary, unpredictable.

Of the reactions to a crisis, it may in general terms be said that two approaches to crisis are possible. On the one hand, a conservative reaction is to start strengthening the crisis-stricken system. In political terms, this is a well known reaction, one which, for example, helped to sustain a state of constant alert in the Soviet bloc or which has, in more recent times, helped the American administration to carry out "protective" measures threatening democratic principles. In this case, crisis is seen as a challenge to which it is replied by reinforcing that which already is, and this reaction could therefore be seen as a dogmatic one. The questions arise, as to how much a political rhetoric of crisis is a reaction to crisis and how much the rhetoric requires a crisis as its support and justification – this gives rise to speculations regarding the possibility of crisis being manufactured in order to push certain measures through. In either case, for "conservative" reaction, crisis is a question to which the right reaction is to answer. The reaction is to mask the crisis or to mask that which has led to the crisis. In non-conservative terms, on the other hand, crisis may be treated as simply a question, which begs other questions. The reaction in this case is not an answer, but

further questions, questions multiplying the critical question (posed by the crisis). This is not a method of de-masking, but rather of non-masking. This praxis may be termed “revolutionary”. Crisis is thus not turned into a conserving “tool” but into a questioning, critical and engaged “tool”, into a “series of interventions in a textual field”¹¹⁸

The present exploration of crisis is informed by the relatedness of crisis and critique, as already delimited by “the etymological linkage of these terms – critical, crisis, and elsewhere criticism, critique,”¹¹⁹ but, yet elsewhere, also transgression, crime.¹²⁰ On a very general level, crisis represents incompatibility. Crisis is not an object, but an event, something which happens. It is an event which is an encounter of one system with another, or of one system with its Other. It is seen as an encounter of a hegemony with a particularity, of a larger system with a minority. It will not be the task of this chapter so much to establish what is meeting what (that is, to objectify crisis by way of transposing the problem onto the questions of two objects which encounter each other) much rather this chapter will be dealing with the *technē* of crisis: since crisis is what happens, some happening must have preceded it, have lead to it, so that it can be stated that crisis is always to a certain degree created. This leading to a crisis is understood as *technē* precisely because it is not a logical leading of a law (as mentioned before) but rather it belongs to the realm of cause. To such a degree that cause as elaborated earlier may be itself seen as a crisis. The *technē* of crisis, which is also a *poiesis*, is above all a *technē* of unpredictability, it is an unpredictable *technē*, which is after all what *technē* (and cause) is. Crisis may thus be seen as an engine for

¹¹⁸ Armand, “The Judgement of Praxis,” *Solicitations*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Armand, “Criticism in a Time of Crisis,” *Solicitations*, 6.

¹²⁰ Crisis, from Gk. *krisis* “turning point in a disease” (used as such by Hippocrates and Galen), lit. “judgment,” from *krinein* “to separate, decide, judge,” from PIE base **krei-* “to sieve, discriminate, distinguish” (cf. Gk. *krinesthai* “to explain”; O.E. *hriddel* “sieve”; L. *cribrum* “sieve,” *crimen* “judgment, crime,” *cernere* (pp. *cretus*) “to sift, separate.”

questions. These questions are likely to be fundamental, that is, concerned with conditions, with founding principles. In crisis, assumptions and conditions materialise.

This chapter will deal with a crisis of reading. A crisis of reading means a crisis of a particular reading. To begin with, this will here be again represented by traditional interpretation and this chapter will again depart from structuralist theory represented by Mukařovský. From this perspective, hypertext as elaborated in the first chapter already represents a crisis of this kind of reading. Insofar as crisis is an incompatibility, this chapter will focus on multiplying the incompatibility by bringing into question further questions. For this chapter, however, such questions will be informing of what represents a crisis for this kind of a reading. The aim, however, is not so much to criticise this kind of reading, much rather the aim is to explore possible alternatives or rather imply possible alternatives. This chapter is not directly engaged and neither is it about engagement. This chapter does the first step: explores concepts that accompany crisis, concepts upon which engaged reading could be grounded or which open the possibility of an engaged reading. Insofar as the praxis of multiplication of questions has been termed revolutionary, it voices a dilemma, a critical dilemma: once a revolution has succeeded, it is prone to become hegemony in its own right. This chapter is therefore reluctant to proceed beyond multiplication of questions, beyond stressing the importance of crisis and incompatibility.

Jacques Derrida has said of literature that it is “a strange institution in which anything may be said.”¹²¹ In general, such possibility of saying anything may lead to praising literature (and art in general) for its humanistic or democratic potential, and it may also lead to exploring the critical undertones of such possibility. In this vein, art has – mainly for thinkers often referred to as poststructuralists – been associated with subversion or with a subversive power, from various perspectives. For structuralism, however, especially in its classical form, any notion of subversion is out of reach, posited – by structuralism aiming at scientific and objective interpretation – beyond the objectives of inquiry. For structuralism, the social function of art does exist, but is only one (and for aesthetics marginal) of its functions. It is seen to reside in a certain “enrichment” of the readers’ experience derived from de-automatisation or de-specialisation (these terms with their social implications differ from purely aesthetic term de-familiarisation), which art is seen to affect – contrary to automatisation and specialisation carried along by the social development and its technological progress.

For Mukařovský art’s “task is [...] to liberate the human discovery capability from the schematising influence bounding the everyday praxis.” Literature and art in general are associated with “enrichment” rather than subversion or critique, that is, with enrichment of the reader’s experience or with a regaining man to the knowledge that “the plurality of active attitudes, which can be assumed towards the reality, is as inexhaustible as the many-sidedness of reality,”¹²² lost in the “rigid hierarchy of single-valued functional

¹²¹ Derek Attridge, “The Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992) 36.

¹²² Jan Mukařovský, “Umění,” *Studie I.*, 187.

organisation"¹²³ and growing specialisation of functionally organised world. This compensatory effect may itself be seen as representing a critique – in a form of a “post-critical” reaction, i.e. a reaction based on a foregoing critique of the current state of the world which deems it as impoverishing or reductive – this chapter will enter the problematic via a different concept Mukařovský introduced late in his structuralist career, a concept which denotes a failure within this “enriching” process: “unintentionality.” This concept emerged in Mukařovský’s essay “Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění” (Intentionality and Unintentionality in Art) written in 1943 where he formulates a thesis concerning the existence and vital importance of “unintentionality” in a work of art.¹²⁴ To paraphrase, Mukařovský claims that while reading, the reader arranges and rearranges fragments of the given work so as to organise them into some unity, around some central meaning. For this central meaning Mukařovský uses the term intentionality. Intentionality is, however, what the reader constructs and is not to be associated with the original author’s intention. Intentionality is not a property of the work, instead it denotes readers’ activity or its result. What in a work of art appears intentional (regardless of the author’s intention) is what the reader sees or understands as intentional, it represents that to which the reader is able to ascribe intention – very simply, what appears intentional (no matter whether actually intended) is that, which makes sense. However, according to Mukařovský, reception of art is sometimes frustrated by moments or fragments of a work, “behind” which no meaning, no intention may be discerned. For such moments of non-understanding, to which the reader is not able to ascribe an intention, for which he cannot account, Mukařovský uses the term “unintentionality” in a work of art.

¹²³ Mukařovský, “Umění,” 187.

¹²⁴ Mukařovský, “Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění,” *Studie I*, 353-390.

Throughout the essay, the actual nature of unintentionality, however, remains unclear or confused: on the one hand it represents an exposed materiality of the work of art (what Mukařovský describes by “a work of art as a thing”), work of chance, the influence of ageing upon a work of art, author’s incompetence in handling the material or lack of talent, and at the same time it represents moments of immediate response to a work of art, moments when the reader so to say stops understanding (theorising, interpreting, decoding, establishing intention) and starts “living” the work of art, is fully absorbed by it and forgets himself as it were. Mukařovský describes such moments as “moments of “being carried off,” and he asserts that “this immediate fascination, [...] transforms a work into a direct part of the recipients life [which] is beyond intentionality.”¹²⁵ The very concept of unintentionality (and its effects as assumed by Mukařovský) is full of paradoxes. The concept itself is a certain crisis (for which the subsequent development of Prague structuralism never managed to account). In the present work, by exploring both the concept and the paradoxes, it is hoped to be arrived at something fundamental.

It is in this second meaning of unintentionality that Mukařovský paradoxically sees its vital function for making a work of art “live,” since it is seen to establish a unique contact with the reader’s “life”. Already the very motif that prompted Mukařovský to formulate the thesis of unintentionality may be seen as an attempt to escape – on theoretical grounds – a certain “rhetoric of inevitability” by which structuralism was accompanied. The thesis may be seen as formulated in response to a certain paradox of the structuralist theoretical attempt to gradually include under the rubric of the structure – and thus explain – all elements of an artwork (in a certain extreme this ambition is represented by Propp’s analysis of fairytales), thereby endowing the construction of the artwork’s structure with a sense of inevitability if

¹²⁵ Mukařovský, “Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění,” 366.

not determinism: without unintentionality the signification of the work would appear automatic, predictable and all too transparent and reading would be only a “passive checking mechanism” to echo Lotman. All this, however, means that, insofar as value is ascribed to art on the basis of its unintentionality, the “life” of a work of art arises as if *despite* a structured unity, despite aesthetic function.

Despite the paradoxes, the concept of unintentionality is important in several respects. First of all it does not explain the experience of *not understanding* a literary work by the reader’s insufficient awareness of the author’s intention (or of the historical context), i.e. by lacking a knowledge of facts, but by a certain internal impasse of the reading process: not understanding occurs not because the reader would not know something, but because the reader cannot *do* something (relate one moment to what was perceived as an overall meaning). It is not a limit of knowledge but a limit of reading. Second, it represents a certain return, after many years of Mukařovský’s institutionalised theorising, to the layman or amateur (“naive” in Mukařovský’s words) experience. And third, closely linked to the second, the very thesis represents a certain limit of a reading process of Mukařovský himself, that is, of structuralist literary theory.

The introduction of unintentionality does – on the level of theory – represent a major shift, important for the explorations of engaged reading. The clash of a descriptive theory (which structuralism is) with the actual process of reading, i.e. with praxis, represents a clash that can be generalised as one between descriptive theory and life praxis that Horkheimer identified as marking a shift from classical to critical theory.¹²⁶ Inspired by this Horkheimer’s thesis, this chapter will proceed as an inquiry into the concept of unintentionality as into a

¹²⁶ Max Horkheimer, “Traditionelle und kritische Theorie,” *Traditionelle und kritische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992) 205-260.

potential “critical essence”¹²⁷ of literary theory as both a (its) crisis and critique. It represents a shift of focus to relations which have hitherto remained out of focus, unperceived: even the very word “unintentionality” – as a negation of the meaning of *intendere*: “to direct one’s attention to” – denotes the overlooked, the invisible, the un-worthy of looking, or possibly also the suppressed. The exploration of a crisis in reading will thus be formed largely as an exploration into what usually is unseen or is (deliberately? necessarily from certain perspective, which is sustained by masking some relations?) kept hidden.

2.

In this context, unintentionality may be further specified with the help of Barthes’s account of what he terms “the third meaning in photography,” introduced in his text entitled *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. For the third meaning describes precisely a change in the direction of focusing, i.e. focusing on that, which was not intended by an author as the focal point, on that, which exists irrespective of any intention. As Barthes writes: “The detail which interests me is not, or not strictly, intentional, and probably must not be so; [...] it does not necessarily attest to the photographer’s art; it says only that the photographer was there.”¹²⁸ For Barthes, this is a certain materiality. Materiality is seen to represent a certain critical rupture in the otherwise smooth surface of the meaning of a given work. For Barthes, such surface is always characterised as a assemblage of “blocks of signification.” The third meaning of a photograph – which Barthes calls the *punctum* – is, however, distinct from these

¹²⁷ Jacques Derrida, cited in Armand, *Solicitations*, 1.

¹²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, 47.

areas of varying “density of connotations.”¹²⁹ Barthes’s definition of the uniqueness of the *punctum* and his definition of photography converge in that both terms attest to that “which has been”: in a photograph of a gypsy violinist, the *punctum* is for Barthes represented by the dirty road under the violinist’s feet. It is the dirty road, to which Barthes’s attention is drawn rather than to the “theme” of the photography (a gypsy violinist). The dirty road, however, is captured on the photograph simply because villages have roads and people walk on roads. The *punctum* attests to the physical (material) presence of the photographer at the (material) site of the photography, it’s a detail, which betrays the uniqueness of things dated or locally bound. It is the materiality of the road, but also the very general materiality of human conditions (such as “people walk on a ground”).

At the same time, the uniqueness of *punctum* is not only described as that, what was not intended in an artwork, but also as that which establishes a direct relation of a particular photograph and a particular viewer’s experience as a certain mediation between the artwork and the reader. In this respect, the *punctum* is that which the particular reader’s “reading” *has made* stand apart from the rest of the image (the interpretation of this rest is largely unproblematic or even automatic, dictated as it were but general discourse: “the code expresses this before I do, takes my place, does not allow me to speak”¹³⁰), *punctum* thus arises in the praxis of a particular “reading”.

In Barthes’s attention paid to the road rather than to the violinist, to the *punctum* rather than to the “theme”, may be seen an echo of Barthes’s earlier essay on the death of the author,¹³¹ since the details referred to as *punctum* offer themselves as if irrespective of the

¹²⁹ Barthes, *Image Music Text*, 13-4.

¹³⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981) 18.

¹³¹ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” *Image Music Text*, 142-149.

author's intention or even contrary to it: the details of *punctum* cannot be *interpreted* in a strict sense, it cannot really be said that the road is dirty because it is meant to stress the poverty of the violinist, rather, the road is dirty because that is how roads are or were (have been) in what Barthes calls Central Europe (Romania and Bulgaria). These moments, details of material inevitability are details as it were outside the structure of the given work as work, and can thus be understood as unintentional: although they may very well have been intentionally *used*, used as that which has been, which has been at hand, they nevertheless retain their own materiality. It is so that these details are echoes of yet another structure, this unintentionality represents an intrusion of another structure or of a structural necessity of a different order (different from the artistic "intention").

In case of roads, it is a structure of "material" conditions. Yet, underlying may also be a certain "historic" structure. This is exemplified in Barthes's analysis of a photograph depicting Queen Victoria on a horseback and a man holding the animal. Let it be quoted at length:

Here is Queen Victoria photographed in 1863 by George W. Wilson; she is on horseback, her skirt suitably draping the entire animal (this is the historical interest, the *studium*); but beside her, attracting my eyes, a kilted groom holds the horse's bridle: this is the *punctum*; for even if I do not know just what the social status of this Scotsman may be (servant? equerry?), I can see his function clearly: to supervise the horse's behaviour: what if the horse suddenly began to rear? What would happen to the queen's skirt, *i.e.*, to *her majesty*? The *punctum* fantastically "brings out" the Victorian

nature (what else can one call it?) of the photograph, it endows this photograph with a blind field.¹³²

In other words, whatever the photographer's intention may have been, the groom *must* have been there, his presence in the photograph is as indisputable as the dirt of the village road is. The groom, according to Barthes, constitutes a blind field within the photograph – although Barthes means by this the blind field whose flicker causes one to perceive motion in a film – since he is not meant to be seen. The important thing, however, is that this blind field, the unintentional, the groom, provides an insight or opens the given work, or its interpretation, into a reality, yet a reality altogether different from the realism of the photograph. It is an encounter with something else. The presence of the groom represents a certain inevitability (in this case directly derived from the “logic” of the Victorian era), a touch of the real, that which cannot be argued away. Because, however, his presence derives from other rules than the structure of the photograph, it provides a passage of treating the photograph differently or critically, which is precisely what Barthes does: for what else his attention paid to the groom is than a violation of the intention of Wilson, and thus, in a way, a violation the Queen's majesty? That, which was meant to preserve it, violates it.

In this, Barthes or the focus on the *punctum*, the very existence of *punctum* or of unintentionality, violates a claim a sovereign hegemony (*majesty*) – of a political power or of “intention” and “author” – tends to assume over representations and images and over the way these should be read. The crisis (of representation) Barthes changed focus is seen to constitute, resides, however, not in the fact that somebody averted their gaze from what is meant to be seen to that which is meant to remain hidden but it resides in the fact, that

¹³² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 57.

averting one's gaze is *possible*: the *punctum* or unintentionality will be produced by the hegemony not as an "side" effect, but by definition of representation (or structuralisation), the crisis has always already been implied in the very structure of the hegemony, due to a necessity (material, structural etc) – and here the critical potential resides. In this respect, the dual nature of the "groom" may be taken to represent a certain structuring condition of the Victorian era. Thus, on the level of one particular structure (the Victorian society) the groom may be seen to manifest that, which on the level of structurality as such was represented by Derrida's concept of the *pharmakon*. In this context, the material necessity (in case of the dirty road) or the social necessity (in case of the presence of the groom) is understood not as an automatism demanded by "objective" interpretation, rather, it is seen as a structural necessity, something, to which the author of the photographs had to conform as much as Plato, as Derrida points out in his reading of *Phaedrus*, had to conform to the structure of mythology in his writing. To the degree that this structure remains un-intended or non-intended it may also be seen to represent a certain structural unconscious, i.e. that, which is necessary for a structure to occur. In a process of reading, which focuses there where direction is (usually) not directed, such as Barthes's, these "unconscious" conditions manifest or erupt in a detail.

Nevertheless, when looking at the groom in the photograph, one does not see "Victorian era" and neither does one see a "structural condition," the only *visible* thing is the image of the groom. Only that the groom is suddenly treated as a sign, representing or manifesting some larger whole (the Victorian era). The whole critical potential of an unintentional detail may therefore be described in terms of metonymy. The unintentionality, whose characteristics with respect to the rest of the artwork as if repeated the characteristics of the aesthetic function with respect to the rest of the "reality" as that, which attracts

attention to the thing itself (work of art as a thing, an object) and as that which stands in a radical opposition to everything else (to the rest of the work or the work's concretisation) – unintentionality is thus posited “within” aesthetic function by way of a metonymy. The moment of unintentionality/crisis may be seen as standing for that which has been masked so far. Insofar as it represents a certain minority or a detail, which stands for much more, of this detail it could be said that it by way of a metonymy represents the incompatible with all the force of the abjected. In this context it might be useful to recall that for Lacan metonymy represents a way of by-passing the censor. This censor may be associated with the commands of “correct” reading as mentioned in the first chapter. What the censor blocks threatens to overturn his “hegemony.”

Similarly to the *punctum* or the groom, in a manner of the *trompe l'oeil* unintentionality is at the same time something trivial (an error, an effect of circumstances, author's insufficiency) and something vital (the meaning of art). On the one hand it is a mere *thingness*: due to what appears to the reader as a failure or a mishap of some sort he suddenly sees the work of art as a thing; instead of reading a text, one is looking at a book. Yet on the other unintentionality is that, to which the value of a work of art *as* art is attached (it makes it “live”). How is this duplicity possible? How can this be the conclusion? Partly, the conclusion may be seen as an echo of a certain metaphysical notion, that a true work of art resists any theory, whereby what resists theory (unintentionality) seems valuable (even if it were trivial, even if it were “mere” materiality of the medium.) Since the structuralist theory is considered as a sophisticated apparatus, anything that escapes it seems by definition to exceed or transcend it. The duplicity itself is due to a fundamental duplicity or uncertainty involved in any act of recognition – it must not be forgotten that both intentionality and unintentionality are located with the recipient, and are thereby acts of recognising – as it is

manifested in “chance,” in an encounter with chance or in judging something to be a matter of chance. The duplicity directly dependent on a “theory” or an epistemological frame and its limits, is not only typical of chance but is constitutive of chance: chance is treated as both a banality and a “higher” intelligent plan.

How is duplicity critical or engaged? Precisely as duplicity which questions attempts at transparent identifications. Chance, too, operates – as for example the importance of seemingly accidental phenomena of parapraxis for psychoanalysis indicate – in a relation to a prior structure of possibility. The process of overturning the recognition of chance, of turning it from that which is to be overlooked to that which becomes vital, is captured by novels of what might be termed the paranoia genre, such as *Foucault's Pendulum* by Eco or Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. This also stands behind novels of shadowy presence such as Armand's *Menudo*.

3.

Barthes assumes that what he can easily understand is already “dictated” by the discourse. In his rendering of the groom as the essence of the Victorian era, Barthes relies on his knowledge of history. The question, however, is not whether he recognised this essence correctly, but again, on theoretical level, it is a question of recognition as such, and its relation to the discursive or interpretive “automatism” with which the intentional has been associated. The question of recognition implies further questions not only concerning reading but concerning intelligence as such. How is intention recognised? Here it becomes the question of not only intention, but – especially in confrontation with the materiality of the “dirty road” to which the artist's intention must conform – of agency and of its

recognition. It is thus on the most fundamental level pointing in the direction of the recognition of intelligence.

By positing intentionality into the mind of the recipient, Mukařovský transformed it into an act of *recognition* of intentionality. In this respect reading is reminiscent of the Turing test of artificial intelligence. This is a hypothesis, which is seen as the only possible way of recognising artificial intelligence as intelligence: the basic idea is that intelligence is what *passes* for intelligence (or for a human). The test itself is textual in its nature, it is based on the assumption that if in a written communication (via a computer screen, for example) a human cannot tell whether his partner in dialogue is another human or a machine, the machine – should it be the case that the partner in the dialogue were a machine – may be regarded as intelligent. The test implies a close relationship between intelligence and interpretation: according to Armand “One of the many implications of Turing’s test hypothesis is that intelligence, as something determinate, is regarded as existing (only) insofar as it is recognisable – as such – or insofar as we attach a form of belief to it – in precisely the same way as we attach belief to meaning or to semantic structures.”¹³³

Reading and interpretation may be seen as a certain “Turing test” in their own right. Reading represents an encounter with human intelligence, and yet this intelligence remains a question of recognition, a question of interpretative capabilities of the participant of the “test”. For the problem which the test hypothesis is trying to avoid or prevent is the problem that humans might not be willing to acknowledge a computer as intelligent, their partner must therefore remain hidden from them. But from this perspective, if reading is an encounter with intelligence, what would unintentionality represent? In other words, what

¹³³ Louis Armand, “Affective Intelligence & the Human Hypothesis,” *Mind Factory*, ed. Louis Armand (Praha: Litteraria Pragensia, 2005) 84-5.

would happen if the person tested were someone generating *their* answers randomly (for example, a dadaist poet)? Or simply someone who would – deliberately or not – violate certain communicative maxims, or simply would not conform to a “good faith”? This implies a question of how much is the recognition of intelligence based on a conformity with certain (discursive) rules, rules of which it might be said that they are *automated*? The concept of intentionality and its role in reading avails of implications comparable to those Armand elaborates with respect to the Turing test of intelligence:

intelligence according to this or any other test hypothesis remains *interpretive* in essence.

And just as laboratory chimpanzees and school children learn to ape various procedures and methodologies for passing the minimal requirements [...] the “simulated” intelligence of a machine will not, in effect, have differed at all from the affective intelligence we commonly encounter in *any test scenario*.¹³⁴

This “aping,” however, problematises this concept of intelligence in the same, yet different way as Mukařovský’s unintentionality: “aping” questions the plausibility of the outcomes of such test, unintentionality poses a question of reactions which exceed the test’s capacity. Insofar as intelligence may be likened to intention, unintentionality in this respect would represent the doubts as to whether, to put it bluntly, some particular reaction is a non-sense or a work of a genius, doubts inherent to the duplicity of unintentionality as already seen (it may be both a triviality and the value of an artwork). At closer inspection, however, the test points in the direction of Heisenberg’s principle that observation affects (or determines) the observed. And this may be extended to reading (interpreting) as well, not only in any test

¹³⁴ Armand, “Affective Intelligence & the Human Hypothesis,” 85.

scenario but also in any interpretation, only a certain kind of intelligence may be captured and as the point of the aping suggests it is not even certain what is being “tested” at all.

The opposition of aping and original contribution is one of the fundamental principles along which the approach to art or “artistic test” is informed. And to distinguish originality from chance is one of the major tasks which justifies the existence of criticism. To put it bluntly, from art it is expected that it proceed not strictly automatically yet not too un-automatically lest it becomes a non-sense. If reading may be considered as a “testing of (an absent, hidden or hypostatised) intelligence,”¹³⁵ it begs the question on what grounds is the decision taken by which a failure of *someone else’s* intention is distinguished from one’s *own* failure of understanding or recognition, from reasons of lack of knowledge or insufficient or wrongly directed process of organising and interpreting the data? That is, on what grounds do we (or can we) assume intention and intelligence (or its lack) in that which we immediately fail to grasp? That is from that which somehow exceeds *our* concept of intelligence?

By the test’s already including the tested, the principle is closely linked to the concept of metonymic recursion such as the one on which Turing’s universal computing machine is founded. To echo Lacan, it may be characterised as a special case of counting expressive of a primary (or conditional) experience out of which the ego emerges: “in this counting he who counts is already included.”¹³⁶ In this respect, this interpretive hypothesis (of both the Turing test and of interpreting literary texts) is not (so much) a test of intelligence, rather it is *critical of* intelligence. In other words, the Turing test “is itself a kind of machine,” as Armand puts it, “whose operations do not simply pose the question of whether or not a machine can be

¹³⁵ Armand, “Affective Intelligence & the Human Hypothesis,” 85.

¹³⁶ Jacques Lacan, “The Freudian Unconscious and Ours,” *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 20.

intelligent, so much as they put intelligence itself into question, and with it the very meaning of what we call man."¹³⁷ Instead of what might be called here an hegemony of identification, recognition of identity and of unproblematic correspondence between the test and the tested, between text and meaning (intention), what arises are questions of simulation and plurality: "a universal Turing machine is capable of simulating all possible Turing machines by means of programmatics in which computing is linked to a general recursiveness (the Church-Turing thesis)."¹³⁸ By analogy a reading of a literary text represents not so much an *either* (original, intended)/*or* (aped, unintended) quality to be detected in the text, but rather a plurality of possibilities, of proliferating "possible worlds" in which the idea of their originality is always already inscribed before the act, a plurality which is produced by the *technē* of reading (or understanding). To extend this point in the direction of an engaged literary theory, reading and interpreting is inherently critical of all understanding. And this feature is seen to resurface in non-understanding – unintentionality.

4.

If unintentionality (as a crisis of understanding) is inherent to the process of understanding (reading), its association with the *punctum* must further be reconsidered. For although it has already been rendered in terms of a mediation (between a particular work and particular reader), that is as a certain *technē* and not as some "object" located in the work of art, the *punctum* remains still an essentially mimetic concept, it is a image which is recognised as a depiction (of the groom, for example) and even materiality remains essentially a depicted

¹³⁷ Armand, "Affective Intelligence," 93-4.

¹³⁸ Armand, *Technē*, 40.

materiality. Yet, the point may be carried farther, to the very materiality of the medium, such that stood at the centre of attention of the avant-garde in general, for example the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, the graphics of which have a similar effect of irreducible and persistent materiality of the signifier as, for example, Derrida's unreadable term *differance*.

As Christopher Butler's account of the development of the avant-garde after the war indicates (in his text *After the Wake: An Essay on the Contemporary Avant-garde*), the effect of irreducible materiality may be achieved (explored or multiplied) by at least two techniques of creating: either by employing chance in the creative process as much as possible or by employing abstraction as much as possible. In either case, according to Butler, and importantly in this context, any sense of intention on the part of the recipient faced with such art is lost, or, in other words, "the key to their interpretation has not yet emerged"¹³⁹ as Butler sums up the problematic in the context of his chapter on collage. The task to reconstruct intention or to recognise intention becomes an impossible one. The two techniques may be seen as manifested by the conception of "ready-mades" and "found objects", on the one hand, or by the concept of an abstraction, that follows rigidly applied strict rules determining (to the point of mathematical accuracy) both the act and the outcome of creation. Thus in the first case, the *whole* (the object as such, the fact of displaying the particular object) is intentional, yet the details can only with problems be attributed to the intention of the artist, since most likely these have either been designed by someone else as much as various distortions visible on the object result from its previous usage, from its history. While in the second case – the case of abstraction – the details of a given work are no doubt intended (produced by the strict rules applied) yet the overall meaning evades us, the work seems much more open to further combinations and permutations rather than to

¹³⁹ Christopher Butler, *After the Wake: An Essay on Contemporary Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) 78.

establishing its “meaning”. As this implies, in certain situation, unintentionality – inability to recognise intention – may spread over the whole of a given work, not just as one of its details.

At closer inspection, these two modes, however, come close together as in fact being one part of the other, thus bringing into a metonymic relation also the terms of chance and materiality. For the painting method of Jackson Pollock, for example, may be seen as a chance effect arrived at by application of certain rules or constraints. In a way, what is arrived at in such formulation is a certain stochastic process of calculated chance or calculation with chance. The importance of a mixture of controlled creation and chance at work in stochastic processes may also be said to have stood behind Mukařovský repeated stress laid on what he termed the “dialectic tension” between intentionality and unintentionality in art.¹⁴⁰ Paradoxically, in stressing the importance of calculated chance is where Mukařovský may be seen to depart from dialectics (in which the negative is by definition to be overcome), from the teleological, to a generative or computational conception of artworks.

5.

The question to be asked with respect to Derrida’s sentence mentioned earlier on is: What allows for the fact that literature allows anything to be said? Derrida’s statement may be seen to denote a basic possibility: not the possibility of saying truth, that is, not a particular possibility, but the possibility itself. Insofar as possibility itself is at the same time the condition of language or of any signifying system, it denotes nothing else than the arbitrary

¹⁴⁰ Mukařovský, “Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění,” 385.

nature of the sign, that is, it denotes the assumption that meaning is not stable or “fixed forever” and is instead always in the process of being constituted. The signifier may always be dissociated and “re-associated” with some other signified. This possibility may be described in Lacan’s terms as the law of the signifier. In reading, where signs retain their usual meaning, yet acquire new meaning through the very process of reading a text, the “working” of the law of the signifier may be seen as manifesting itself with a higher intensity.

This intensity may again be linked to unintentionality, where the inability to recognise intention exposes the very materiality of the artwork. In his essay “Tuchē and Automaton,” Lacan explores what he terms “the encounter with the real.” Aristotle, from whom Lacan has borrowed the term *tuchē*,¹⁴¹ “uses it in his search for cause.”¹⁴² The encounter with the real, is set “beyond the automaton, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs, by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle.”¹⁴³ Mukařovský’s notion of the “unintentional” displays – with respect to reading – similar characteristics: not only in unintentionality’s occurrence “as if by chance” or “accidentally” or the association of both terms with some “obstacle” which is “unassimilable” – which are Lacan’s words for *tuchē* – but also in its on the one hand somehow exceeding the signification of the rest of the work (which may result in non-understanding) and in its being explicitly rendered as dis-pleasing, or frustrating the pleasure (which, however, is in Mukařovský’s context aesthetic pleasure which cannot be associated directly with the psychoanalytic concept of the pleasure principle).

¹⁴¹ The Greek word *tuchē* can mean fate, necessity, chance, or good or bad luck, an instance of divine intervention.

¹⁴² Jacques Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 53.

¹⁴³ Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” 53-4.

This “encounter with the real,” which is always a “missed encounter,”¹⁴⁴ a trauma representing a crisis of the symbolic order, is itself possible thanks to the law of the signifier, which may be seen to condition both “aesthetic-work” and dreamwork. In the case elaborated by Lacan (“the burning child”) the *tuchē*, however, represents a certain crisis of the dreamwork, too, being situated, as Lacan puts it, “between dream and awakening,”¹⁴⁵ as if even contradictory to the dreamwork (“it might correspond to [...] reality without emerging from sleep.”¹⁴⁶) This analogy further helps to stress another important feature, which may be associated with unintentionality. The verge of waking, where the *tuchē* made its the entry in the analysed case, may be understood as a certain transitory, hence weak moment, moment of vulnerability, one which is once again due to a convergence of two incompatibilities, which Lacan describes as two processes of on the one hand “reconstitut[ing] my entire representation around [...] perception” and on the other as “my consciousness reconstitu[ing] itself around this representation.”¹⁴⁷ In reading, this may describe the process of establishing a meaning of a perceived text, a meaning in which the reader is already included. In principle, reading may be thus be a similar mechanism of a constant re-constituting both of representation and of consciousness, a process whose failure – unintentionality – is not a mere momentous lapsus but a fundamental crisis of representation, of which the “entry” of unintentionality is indicative.

¹⁴⁴ Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” 55.

¹⁴⁵ Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” 59.

¹⁴⁶ Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” 57-8.

¹⁴⁷ Lacan, “Tuchē and Automaton,” 56.

In general, unintentionality – as representing a crisis brought about by the technē of reading, as it represents materiality as a condition of a structurality, as it resonates with questions of intelligence and unconscious – solicits a different approach in search of *its* “meaning”: the particular moment of unintentionality encountered in the reception of a literary text should not be scrutinised by way of an answer to the question: what does this mean? what could this mean? Such scrutiny would amount to an attempt to transform the unintentional into the intentional, by way of additional analysis or extended interpretation. Instead, the scrutiny should be informed by the question: what does it represent? Or rather: what has been happening? how did it come about? what made it come about? what fundamental assumptions does this crisis point to?

The problem, which Mukařovský names unintentionality, may be understood as a clash between – as he himself puts it – nature and culture, between direct and mediated experience, theory (ideality) and praxis. Without praising the value of such “direct” experience – which is nonetheless not less mediated, even for its supposed directness – as an emanation of truth or as something authentic, what this concept represents is a certain limit of theory – insofar as theory is understood as a set of assumptions with a certain claim at universality – its blind or its critical moment, the moment of crisis. As already mentioned, for Horkheimer such clash between theory and praxis delimits the paradoxes of what he terms *klasische Theorie*, that is, a descriptive and on the assumptions of “objectivity” founded theoretical thinking, and simultaneously the clash calls forth the emergence of what he terms *kritische Theorie*. The difference between the two may be characterised as a shift from describing a certain concept (such as a class, by statistical data and other positivist

undertaking) to observing how that concept actually works (that is, how the concept of class functions, how it may contribute to preservation of certain social hierarchies rather than others, how it is in fact linked and necessary for these to be possible in the first place: how it is part of a certain structural unconscious). To advocate for reading based on incompatibility, on “unintentionality” is to advocate a critical – or engaged – literary theory.

The incompatibility represented by the unintentional is to be “appreciated:” not to be overcome but itself scrutinised under the aesthetic function, i.e. the particular details of the incompatibility are to be observed. In accordance with Shannon’s thesis, that the most information is carried by noise (since non-noise is to a considerable degree composed of redundant information, which is the basis of its legibility)¹⁴⁸ it is unintentionality, moments of resistance or of loss of an “about” that open descriptive (decoding, interpretative) reading to an engaged or critical interventions.

For writing has traditionally been considered a “dangerous supplement” precisely on the ground of the possibility that it might “say” anything, that it might be made to “speak” on its own: irrespective of “meaning” or “intention”. In “unintentionality,” literary writing may by a critical theory be made to reveal hitherto unperceived assumptions and relations. In this, literary text may be said to acquire a potential to *cause*, to give rise to unpredictable conclusions beyond the control of the *law*. Thus, the critical potential of the unintentional is not to be associated with a revelation of truth and neither is there need to associate it with subversion on the basis of the abjected. Rather, it may on the contrary be associated with *the possible*, with the future possibility it implies: not a subversion but a forethrow. Thus reading may become poietic.

¹⁴⁸ cf. Claude Shannon, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,” *Bell Systems Technical Journal* 27 (1948): 379-432, 623-56.

The “[critical] spark,” to replace the word originally used by Lacan’s in this sentence – “creative” – “does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualised. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connection with the rest of the chain.”¹⁴⁹ Reading as a praxis of a *technē* arising from this incompatibility is to be situated in the ambiguity of critique and invention, ambiguity matching the original ambiguity of *krinein* as both crisis and critique, as crisis always already being a critique relating that, which was, to that, which will be, by way of a *technē* of mediation, as both a nostalgia and a forethrow, and also matching the ambiguity of chance as both an error and a gateway to the underlying structurality. Thus it may be hoped to be arrived at a genuine invention, at a “future possibility” in Armand’s words. Chance is present in rule, unintentionality is present in intention. Such properly post modern¹⁵⁰ notion, translatable as “coming after being implied,” “being after being implied,” as always already being there, as will be what has been, a metonymic notion of structural inherence leads to a question what is it that has been? *What has taken place?* This question is the question which marks the transition from classical to critical theory. It is a question which may be seen as already affecting a critique, a question which springs from incompatibility. It is a question, which opens the possibility of an engaged literary theory.

¹⁴⁹ Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,” *Ecrits*, 157.

¹⁵⁰ *Modern*: from *modo* [by measure]; hence [only, merely, but, just]; “si modo, modo si,” or “modo” alone with subj., [provided that, if only]; “modo ne,” [provided that...not]; “modo non,” [all but, nearly]; “non modo ...sed etiam,” [not only ...but also]. Of time, [just, lately; soon, directly]; “modo ... modo,” [at one time ...at another ...].

5: CONCLUSION

In exploring the possibility of engagement in contemporary literary theory, this work has attempted most of all to shift the meaning of the notion of engagement: from such reading that proves an already established to inquiry into the very nature of textuality. By engagement it is meant a critical exploration of assumptions that emerge as critical throughout the process of reading. In this sense, an engaged reading of a literary “work” is a reading that questions its own assumptions precisely by way of a textual encounter.

To accomplish such a shift, a conception of reading in general and of text and textuality in general has had to be reconceived. Here the notions of hypertext have been explored in order to emphasise the non-linearity of text, according to which text is thereby seen as a certain field of possibilities, reading being a praxis of activation and realisation of only some of the possibilities. Text and textuality have in turn been seen not so much as mere manifestations of an aesthetic category but rather as surfaces or even as an interface between precisely the possible and the actual. To regard textuality as an interface, however, is to regard textuality as a site of mediation, a mediation which would not be possible without the interface. Textuality, or rather a textual encounter – reading – has therefore been seen as a certain *technē* of mediation between radical incompatibilities. It has been attempted to stress the fundamental importance of the incompatible in that it has been seen as a condition of the possibility of reading. Further, in order to stress that reading a literary text is not something which happens in a socially restricted area and which therefore is meaningful only to an equally limited degree, the very process of reading, of establishing connections and relations and above all of encountering “hidden” assumptions, has been tied in with questions of technology, the unconscious and of intelligence. What links all these concepts is a similar

technē of mediation or creation. If it is demonstrated that reading is a process not *comparable* to the establishing of subjectivity but is directly one of the manifestations of the process of establishing subjectivity, then this consequently opens the possibility of engaged reading, i.e. of a reading that addresses some of the most fundamental questions of “man”. Reading a literary work is not distinct from reading any other text in a very broad sense (i.e. the symbolic). Reading a literary work may, however, be viewed as a comprised version of textuality, as a certain experimental site. This is a site of the most fundamental experience, which is, however, also the most critical experience: one of the emergence of new information, one of shifting or altering what seemed as stable meanings, an experience of re-signification. The very possibility of re-signification, poetic language lets us experience, is inherently and strongly critical in that it for ever questions any notion of stability of a system: from political or social systems, from various specialised systems such as various literary theories, to the “system” of subject and its identity.

In this respect, the greatest obstacle to overcome is the urge to comment upon literature, to resist the temptation to tell the truth about literature. Rather, the point of reading as seen by this work could be formulated as to “listen” to literature, i.e. to respond to the uniqueness of each individual work. Insofar as this uniqueness, any uniqueness in fact, may be regarded as an incompatibility, “listening” to uniqueness would amount to focusing on the incompatibilities encountered throughout the process of reading. It has been therefore argued for the importance of a crisis of reading. In other words, the possibility of engaged reading opens up with non-understanding. This work may, therefore, be seen as informed by the contemporary theoretical foregrounding of the importance of technology in that it treats text or textuality not as a message but rather as a set of constraints or a constrained procedure. In these “machinic” terms, reading is not seen as a dialogue between a reader and

a metaphysical ideal or ideology but rather it is seen as an event taking place in the convergence of variously constraint systems, in consequence of which the institutions of literature and literary theory are critically transfigured as an inquiry into their own restrictions, in both the ideological and theoretical implications.

6: RESUMÉ

Tato práce zkoumá možnost angažovanosti v literární teorii. Hovořit o angažovanosti však předpokládá určité změny ve způsobu, jakým jsou chápány některé tradiční pojmy literární teorie, v této práci reprezentovány především pražským strukturalismem a literární hermeneutikou. Pojem „angažovanost“ označuje v této práci kritický způsob čtení, nikoliv však kritický ve smyslu „pečlivého“ čtení literárního díla, tedy kritického k literárnímu dílu a jeho kvalitám. Angažovaný způsob čtení zde označuje čtení, které je kritické ke kontextům překračujícím rámec toho, co se označuje jako „dílo“.

Tezí první kapitoly – nazvané Čtení – je, že čtení představuje ve své podstatě proces. Tento proces však není chápán teleologicky, není tedy chápán jako ukončitelný, ale je naopak chápán jako prostý sled událostí. K rozlišení těchto dvou možností chápání čtení je třeba nejprve rozlišit dvě různá pojetí textu literárního díla, neboť to, jak bude nahlíženo na proces čtení, je přímo závislé na tom, jak se nahlíží na samotný text. První kapitola proto na základě Rolanda Barthesa rozlišuje „dílo,“ které je definováno uzavřeností a lineárností (čímž dává základ tomu, aby se i čtení chápalo lineárně jako aplikování metody za účelem dosažení jistého cíle), a „text“, který je naopak definován otevřeností a nelinearitou. V tomto kontextu přistupuje pak práce k rozboru pojmu hypertext, vychází při tom z práce George P. Landowa *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*¹. Hypertext, který jako elektronické medium není vázán na materialitu knihy, je však rozebírán především jako koncept, díky kterému je možno realizovat představy o otevřeném či de-centrovaném textu a textuálnosti, jak je již charakterizovali poststrukturalističtí myslitelé

¹ George P. Landow, *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

jako Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault či Gilles Deleuze a Félix Guattari. Především však pojem hypertextu umožňuje překročit představu textu jako „díla“, tedy umožňuje překročit představu, že literární text je určitý objekt, který lze zkoumat ve své podstatě objektivně, neboť taková představa objektu vyvolává další představu, která již má přímý vliv na pojetí čtení, totiž že tento objekt „obsahuje“ různé věci, jako je například autorský záměr, záměr textu a také smysl textu. V tomto scénáři není pro čtení jiná role, než odkrývání těchto svým způsobem již přítomných významů.

Hypertext je tedy viděn jako koncept, který zdůrazňuje jak nepřítomnost jakéhokoliv jednotícího centra textu, tak jako koncept zdůrazňující právě procesuální povahu čtení. Takto pojaté čtení by mohlo být nejlépe popsáno jako série aktivací určitých možností, bez toho, že by některé aktivace byly „správné“ a jiné ne, tyto aktivace jednak vytváří propojení mezi nejrůznějšími vrstvami textu tak mezi různými texty a jednak jsou do značné míry ovlivněny náhodou. Kritický potenciál hypertextu, tedy potenciál pro uvažování o angažovanosti v literární teorii, je spatřován nikoliv tak v tom, že by se jednalo o „demokratizující technologii“², jako spíše právě v tom, že – obecně řečeno – strhává pozornost k tomu, jakým způsobem jsou určité významy aktivovány a proč: návaznost, která se v lineárním textu může stavět jako logická a do jisté míry nevyhnutelná, se v pojetí textu jako hypertextu proměňuje v návaznost vycházející ze série různých strategických rozhodnutí a současně i z náhodných důvodů.

Práce poté přikračuje k analýze pojmů nevyhnutelnosti na jedné straně a nepředvídatelnosti na straně druhé, a to nad textem Jurije Lotmana „The Text as a Process of

² Landow, 31.

Movement“³. Ukazuje se, že pojem nevyhnutelnosti ve své podstatě implikuje také představu transparentnosti media a současně bezproblémovost překladu. Lotman, který takové představě zejména vzhledem k popisu vzniku „nových informací“ oponuje, tak činí právě zdůrazněním role náhody. Na analýze Dostojevského deníků dokládá obecnou představu „tvořivosti“ nikoliv jako postupu podle předem určeného plánu, postupu, který by se tak mohl zdát právě jako bezproblémový překlad tématu do textu, ale naopak zdůrazňuje, že vznik nové informace je spojen s aktivací jen některých možných implikací určitých klíčových symbolů. Tento proces aktivace nelze“ mezi z výsledného textu zpětně rekonstruovat. Právě v tomto ohledu užívá tato práce slovo technē pro popis „překladu určitou sítí možností na jedné straně a konkrétní realizací některé z těchto možností na straně druhé, technē je pak chápáno odlišně od pouhé metody. Prostá metoda by umožňovala rekonstrukci procesu vzniku nové informace, umožňovala by dedukci. Současně vznik nové informace, samotnou možnost vzniku nové informace, pokládá tato práce za základ jakékoliv kritiky či angažovanosti, a to do té míry, do jaké je zdání nevyhnutelné návaznosti legitimizující pro jakoukoliv hegemonii. Už samotná možnost nové informace jistotu nevyhnutelnosti a současně s tím i představu čtení jako prosté objektivní rekonstrukce skrytých významů.

Princip neurčitosti, nemožnosti jednoznačné dedukce, je dále rozvinut zejména s pomocí termínu *pharmakon* Jacquesa Derridy⁴. Tímto termínem Derrida označuje zásadní nerozhodnutelnost či nejednoznačnost strukturních opozic, tato nerozhodnutelnost však podle něho stojí v samém základu strukturnosti jako takové: jako její podmínka ji umožňuje, současně však tato podmínka strukturnosti se vzhledem k různým strukturám jeví jako jejich

³ Yuri Lotman, "The Text as a Process of Movement," *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 2000).

jisté zpochybnění, totiž zpochybnění jejich statutu nevyhnutelnosti. Tím se ovšem i problematika vzniku nové informace a potažmo i sama představa čtení dostává k samým základům strukturnosti, což zároveň otevírá možnost zásadní kritiky a potažmo i angažovanosti.

Představa angažovanosti, která by nebyla založena na interpretování určitého „díla“ podle předem daných schémat, se tak rýsuje jako určitá možnost kriticky zkoumat samotné základy textuality a strukturnosti. Jako jistou strategii pro toto zkoumání se nabízí chápat čtení jako proces, který nespěje k jednoznačnému závěru, ale naopak ke zmnožování nejednoznačností, tedy šíření hypertextové nelinearity.

Druhá kapitola – „Text“ – se zabývá především otázkou, na niž jsme již narazili, tedy otázkou vztahu mezi „polem“ možností na jedné straně a určitými realizacemi některých z těchto možností na straně druhé. V kontextu angažovaného čtení literatury jsem se rozhodl vyjít z představy vztahu uměleckého díla a „skutečnosti“ tak, jak ji formuluje teze Jana Mukařovského, totiž že umělecké dílo odkazuje ke „skutečnosti jako celku“⁴, a dále tuto tezi přeformulovat právě ve smyslu vztahu mezi aktualizací a možnostmi. Teze druhé kapitoly spočívá v tom, že „text“ již není chápán jako pouhý prostředek či nástroj sdělení, ale spíš jako rozhraní mezi možnostmi a jejich aktualizací, přičemž zároveň toto rozhraní je jediný způsob, jak lze ono „pole“ možností zakusit či zkoumat, tedy lze je zkoumat jen praxí čtení. Klíčovou je především otázka způsobu, jakým možnost přechází v aktualizovanou možnost. Tento způsob nemůže být pouze instrumentální a proto je opět popsán termínem technē, který se tato kapitola pokouší dále specifikovat.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

⁵ Jan Mukařovský, „Význam estetiky,“ *Studie I*, eds. Jan Červenka a Milan Jankovič (Brno: Host, 2000) 66.

Nad Lotmanovým esejem "The Text as Process of Movement" se opět zkoumá problematika vzniku nové informace. Pro Lotmana je vznik nové informace podmíněn a to stejným způsobem, jako je podmíněno i samotné myšlení: existencí minimálně „dvou rozdílně konstruovaných systémů [a] výměnou informací, ke kterým oba dospěly.“⁶ Mezi těmito dvěma systémy dochází k prostředkování formou překladu, který však je podle Lotmana v zásadě „nemožným překladem“. V návaznosti na Lotmana chápu vznik nového tak, že je záležitostí technē překladu či technē prostředkování mezi dvěma nesourodými systémy, následkem čehož každý pokus o překlad je současně i deformací. Právě tato deformace současně umožňuje tvoření nových informací. Lotman tuto deformaci zásadním způsobem spojuje s poetickým jazykem či rétorikou, když tvrdí, že metafora a metonymie nejsou zdaleka jen ornamenty, ale jsou naopak jediný prostředek „nemožného“ překladu: právě ony umožňují myšlení.

Pro další zkoumání „překladu“, který je zároveň deformací a tvořením, a pro další zkoumání významu tohoto překladu pro úvahy o povaze vztahu mezi textualitou a „skutečností“ se práce obrací ke studii Martina Heideggera „The Question Concerning Technology“. Heidegger zkoumá způsob, jakým se prostředkuje mezi možnostmi využití světa pro potřeby technologie na jedné straně a konkrétní realizací těchto možností na druhé. Podle Heideggera je toto prostředkování charakterizováno jako „odkrývání“, resp. jako přechod ze skrytosti do ne-skrytosti. Nejedná se však o instrumentální proces prostého aplikování (či co bychom mohli v návaznosti na již řečené nazvat dedukcí), nýbrž o „způsobování“. Toto způsobování však náleží k technē, a Heidegger v tomto kontextu tvrdí, že technē není spojeno jen s technologií, ale i s uměním, neboť ve své podstatě, „náleží k

⁶ Lotman, "Rhetoric as a Mechanism for Meaning-Generation," 36.

vytváření, k *poiesis*, *technē* je něco *poietického*⁷. Pro úvahy o možnosti angažovaného čtení, tedy pro úvahy o kritickém potenciálu textuality, se zdá především důležitý Heideggerův termín *Bestand*, jímž označuje to, co nutně (jako podmínka) předchází odkrývání a způsobování, totiž „stav připravenosti“. Tento stav připravenosti, který se ovšem vyjeví až konkrétní praxí odkrývání, lze velmi podnětně vztáhnout jak na uměleckou tvorbu, tak na recepci umění. *Bestand* totiž označuje určité vytržení z kontextu, které teprve umožňuje vykročit ke způsobování. Toto vytržení z kontextu a následná možnost ustanovení kontextů nových lze považovat za charakteristické nejen pro například uměleckou techniku koláží či „nalezených předmětů“, ale je svým způsobem charakteristické i pro koncept hypertextu. Kritický potenciál, který obsahuje termín *Bestand*, je nejen v možnosti vsazení vytrženého do kritického kontextu, ale především právě samou možností způsobit jiné využití.

Kapitola dále rozvíjí otázku činitele, agenta, který toto způsobování iniciuje, a současně otázku možného vztahu činitele a textuality. Proto se nejprve zkoumá vztah vědomí a nevědomí, zejména se zřetelem k tomu, že pojetí nevědomí u Jacquesa Lacana lze chápat jako další zpřesnění onoho „pole“ možností. Současně lze vztah mezi vědomím a nevědomím chápat jako další domyšlení představy, že myšlení či nové informace vznikají na rozhraní dvou nesourodých „systémů“. Prostředkování mezi vědomím a nevědomím se podle Lacana děje způsobováním. Toto prostředkování tedy nepatří do řádu zákonů (instrumentality, dedukce), ale je svým způsobem „neanalyzovatelné“⁸, a to zejména proto, že se do značné míry děje deformací, kterou Lacan (v návaznosti na Sigmunda Freuda) ztotožňuje s metaforou a metonymií. Základní podmínkou, která umožňuje prostředkování

⁷ Martin Heidegger, „The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) 318.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (London: Vintage, 1998) 21.

mezi vědomím a nevědomím a tak vlastně vůbec existenci subjektu, je to, co Lacan označuje jako „zákon označujícího“, tedy, zjednodušeně řečeno, možnost „použít jazyk k označení něčeho úplně jiného než co se říká“⁹. Pro zkoumání možnosti angažovanosti se tento Lacanův závěr zdá klíčový, neboť v něm lze spatřit možnost takového použití jazyka, které je *vždy jiné*, přičemž sama tato možnost je zároveň podmínkou fungování jazyka i zdrojem (potenciálně kritické) nepředvídatelnosti, která se vzpírá „pravidlu rozumu“¹⁰.

Vztah mezi textualitou a způsobem fungování mysli lze v tomto ohledu, jak ukazuje Louis Armand v knize *Literate Technologies*, chápat jako vztah vzájemné podmíněnosti. Textualitu nelze chápat jako prostředek k vyjadřování představ, neboť přísně vzato *v* mysli žádné představy nejsou, protože ani „v mozku nejsou žádné obrazy/představy.“¹¹ Otázkou, ze které tato kapitola vycházela, totiž jaké povahy je vztah mezi dílem a „skutečností“, by tedy bylo možno chápat jako otázku textuality, která podmiňuje subjektivitu. Takto pojatá textualita pak otevírá prostor pro angažované čtení, totiž čtení kritické v širokém smyslu.

Tématem třetí kapitoly – Krize – je právě pojem krize a jeho implikace pro angažované čtení. Teze této kapitoly je, že angažované čtení musí z krize vycházet. Krize sama o sobě představuje, jak naznačuje i etymologie slova, jak krizi, tak i kritiku či určitý kritický moment. Moment krize lze považovat za moment, kdy se vyjeví to, co za běžných okolností zůstává skryto, což ve své podstatě vždy znamená, že krize nechává pocítit podmínky či skryté předpoklady, na nichž je za jiných okolností založeno „běžné“ fungování. Vše, co bylo

⁹ Jacques Lacan, „The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,” *Ecrits*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W.Norton, 1977) 155.

¹⁰ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 21.

¹¹ Louis Armand, *Literate Technologies: Language, Cognition & Technology* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 30.

doposud rozebíráno – vznik nové informace, způsobování, překlad, který je v podstatě nemožný, ale i nevědomí – lze považovat za projevy krize či za určité kritické momenty.

Tato kapitola se pokouší specifikovat krizi a její význam pro proces čtení. Vychází ze studie „Záměrnost a nezáměrnost v umění“ Jana Mukařovského a následně chápe „nezáměrnost“ právě jako projev krize čtení či rozumění textu. Právě v tomto významu se „nezáměrnost“ zdá být klíčovou pro jakékoliv angažované čtení, a sice jako východisko; problém či určitý blok, který „nezáměrnost“ představuje v rámci čtení, není ovšem k odstranění či překonání, ale naopak je k zmnožování. Implikace Mukařovského teze jsou dále rozvíjeny pomocí termínu *punctum* (či „třetí význam fotografie“) Rolanda Barthesa, který umožňuje zpřesnit vztah krize rozumění a obecnějších (například historických) souvislostí. Současně však Mukařovského studie implikuje i velmi obecné otázky lidské inteligence a schopnosti či vůbec možnosti ji rozeznat.

Význam „nezáměrnosti“ pro možnost angažovanosti v literární teorii spočívá právě v tom, že si žádá jiný přístup. Nelze ji vysvětlovat, je nutné obrátit se k tomu, co ji způsobilo. Vyžaduje otázku: k čemu zde došlo? Tím se z angažovaného čtení stává v prvé řadě kritické zkoumání instituce literární teorie, potenciálně však i kritické zkoumání institucí a teorií obecně.

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