

Okrogla miza SEP na Vilenici
O branju: Bralna izkušnja in
njene oblike v sodobnem času

CEI Round Table at Vilenica
On Reading: Reading experience and
its forms in modern times



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Konzept
Concept



O branju

Tanja Lesničar-Pučko

Bralna kultura se običajno meri kvantitativno, po številu kupljenih in izposojenih knjig, in na isti podlagi se presoja tudi vrsta čtiva, manj pa je znanega o tem, kdo so bralci in kaj branje sploh predstavlja, kaj je bralna izkušnja, kaj jo določa in kako ona določa bralca – na kratki in dolgi rok.

Branje je lahko javno dostopna izkušnja preko drugih (preko branja na glas za druge, radia, cd-posnetkov ali nastopov) ali intimna individualna izkušnja, v vsakem primeru pa po svoji naravi izmuzljiva in težavna za analizo. Zgodovinsko se je branje, kot v knjigi *Zgodovina branja* nazorno pokaže tudi Alberto Manguel, razvijalo v različnih kulturnih okoljih na različne načine, začeni s prvimi zapisi na različnih nosilcih, ki so se nenehno spreminjali, s tem pa tudi dostopnost in odnos do branja in zapisanega.

Na eni strani postaja branje vse pomembnejše, na drugi strani pa že od začetkov obstajajo tudi dvomi v njegovo koristnost: dvomi filozofske narave, kakršne je izražal Sokrat, ki je menil, da branje pomen in smisel zacementira, medtem ko ju dialog razpira; dvomi religioznega izvora, ki v branju vidijo moralno pretnjo (predvsem za ženske in otroke) in nevarnost herezije (pri svobodnem interpretiranju zapisanega); in končno ideološki dvomi, češ da knjige širijo nevarne ideje, ki ogrožajo družbenopolitični red. K temu je treba dodati še večne dvome o tem, ali branje človeka vpeljuje ali oddaljuje od resničnega življenja (karkoli že naj bi to pomenilo).

Zapisano tako že samo po sebi zaradi svoje trajnosti in možnosti neskončnega ponavljanja branja postane izredno dragocena materializirana vednost, ki si jo je mogoče prisvojiti, s tem pa tudi izredno močno orodje ali orožje; dostop do zapisanega, pismenost in zmožnost razumevanja in interpretacije je eden najpomembnejših elementov prevlade.

Zgodovina branja pa je polna avantur tudi na mikroravni, na ravni osebnih srečevanj s knjigo od najbolj ranega otroštva, ko je knjiga še slikanica, a že čudežni predmet, v katerem se skriva in razkriva ves svet, do branja, ki ga za nas iz nje potegnejo drugi. Temu sledi (včasih mukotrpen) boj za osvojitve bralne zmožnosti in s tem za osamosvojitve, za pravico do lastnega (notranjega) bralnega glasu, do lastne izbire čtiva in lastnega razumevanja. To je obdobje, ko fikcija postane neodtujljiv del naše psihe in naših pogledov na svet, formativni element, katerega težo je izjemno težko oceniti tako znanstveno kot osebno. Psiha kot tabula rasa – če kaj takega sploh obstaja – je kmalu popisana s tolikimi, tudi že zdavnaj pozabljenimi branji, da se zdiyo njihovi palimpsesti povsem nerazberljivi, že skoraj dobesedno vtisnjeni tudi v naša telesa. Kdo ve, koliko bralk je nevede oponašalo gib, ki ga je tako natančno popisal Henry James, koliko bralcev pa držo junaka iz Proustovega *Iskanja izgubljenega časa*. Bi bilo pretirano trditi, da smo strastni bralci v veliki meri sestavljeni iz fikcij papirja, ki smo ga prelistali skozi življenje?

V čem je neskončna privlačnost branja? Branje ne zadovoljuje le človekove imanentne potrebe po pojasnilih in razlagah sveta okoli nas, temveč tudi po možnostih biti in bivanja, po neskončnem številu življenj in usod, ki niso naše, a jih želimo poznati, razumeti, jih skozi knjigo uzreti na način, kot ga je določil avtor, a hkrati tudi zunaj njega, z vložkom lastnih predstav in pogledov. V tem je knjiga neizmerno bolj »demokratska« od filma – obraz, ki ga je moja domišljija nadela markizi de Merteuil med prebiranjem Laclosevih *Nevarnih razmerij*, ni mogel biti identičen z nobenim od obrazov milijona drugih bralcev, pa četudi smo se ure in ure pogovarjali o tem, komu v realnosti bi bil lahko podoben. Vsem pa ga je s svojo izbiro Glenn Close za to vlogo zacementiral režiser filma Stephen Frears. Vse naše individualne domišljjske vizualizacije tega lika je odplaknila dobra ura dresure v en sam izbran obraz; nihče izmed nas se ne spominja več, kakšna je bila »naša« markiza. Svet se je skrčil za milijon različic.

Neskončne možnosti interpretacij pomenov, ki so enako neulovljive kot vizualizacije, ki jih bralec nevede proizvaja v svoji domišljiji, kažejo ne le na odprtost literature, ampak tudi na osebno pogojenost branja, na

bralčevo osebno »predzgodbo« in na njegovo predznanje, ki oba določata izid in odnos do branja in do prebranega: predstave, ki si jih bralci po vsem svetu ustvarijo ob prebiranju romana japonske pisateljice Murasaki Šikibu *Princ in dvorne gospe*, napisanega okoli leta 1000, so verjetno v precejšnji meri zbir neverjetnih fantazij, ki z oddaljeno japonsko kulturo izpred tisoč let nimajo nobene zveze. In vendar ta posoda, imenovana roman, ljudem onstran časa in prostora omogoča vnos njihovega razumevanja, njihove identifikacije v skupnem in čudenja v različnem, ki premore zadostno koherentnost, da lahko proizvede smisel prebranega. Misel o tem, kaj bi si o vseh teh smislih mislila gospa Šikibu, je enako romaneskna kot roman sam.

Avtor torej piše tudi onstran svojega sveta in svojega časa, literatura je v svoji naravi potencialnost, možnost, da jo nekdo prebere in z branjem oživi na način, o katerem avtor ni mogel niti sanjati. Stvari, ki jih je zapisal, se večkrat izmikajo celo njemu samemu, njegovim zavestnim intencam. Ko avtor sam bere svoje lastno delo, ko je on tisti, ki ga kot stvaritelj najbolj »razume«, je treba vedno upoštevati še del, ki se mu izmika, ki se mu zapiše, ne da bi poznal njegovo zmožnost produciranja drugačnih smislov, ki jih uresničijo šele bralci s svojimi optikami. Interpretacija je vedno delo v nastajanju, ne le v zgodovinskem in družbenem, ampak tudi v individualnem času – nikoli ne stopiš dvakrat isti v isto knjigo.

Ali obstajajo bolj in manj relevantna branja? Vsekakor, in to že na čisto formalni ravni recitacije, kar izvrstno dokazuje tudi tradicija vileniških branj, kjer se avtorji po svojih najboljših močeh mikastijo z lastnimi stih, eni uspešno, drugi manj, in jim dajejo včasih presenetljive poudarke, ki nas opozarjajo na izgubljeni oralni izvor poezije; hkrati pa so mnogi avtorji zelo občutljivi, kadar jih deklamirajo drugi.

Na ravni vsebinske interpretacije so zadeve ravno tako dvoumne. Kako bere običajni bralec in kako »pooblaščen«, se pravi strokovno podkovan analitični bralec? Ali bere slednji zmeraj enako ne glede na različne funkcije, kot profesor literature, knjižničar, urednik, lektor, knjigarnar, kritik? Ali pa v vlogi profesorja knjigo sopostavlja z drugimi, kot urednik prepozna njeno tržno vrednost, kot lektor njene jezikovne šibkosti,

kot kritik pa njeno vsebinsko plitvost? Ta raznorodna stroka, ki spremlja knjigo od njenega nastanka do vstopa v »javno« življenje oz. končne umestitve v literarno zgodovino (ali zunaj nje), s svojimi pogledi definira izbiro čtiva, šolski literarni kanon, ponudbo izdanih knjig na trgu, vse to pa v mešanici poznavalskosti, (finančnih) interesov in nenazadnje čisto osebnega okusa, nagnjenj: tako lahko spregleduje ali forsira cele segmente produkcije (žanrske, geografske, spolne).

Razviti del sveta se po stoletjih nenehnega širjenja branja že sooča z obratom, z upadanjem klasičnega branja najmlajših generacij, ki ga nadomešča računalniško »branje«, ki je v prvi vrsti brskanje. Kaj za izobraževanje pomeni to selektivno, parcialno branje na internetu, ki prinaša več informacij, a manj integralnih besedil, poglobljenih analiz in sintez? Kakšna bo kultura in nasploh družba prihodnosti, v kateri se bo nepismenosti deprivilegiranega dela svetovnega prebivalstva pridružila množica le z računalniki opismenjenih ljudi, medtem ko bo klasična opismenjenost verjetno v zatonu? Bo tovrstna izobrazba zmožna misliti človečnost, demokracijo in umetnost?

To je verjetno vprašanje, ki si ga bo treba še ničkolikokrat zastaviti.

On Reading

Tanja Lesničar-Pučko

Reading culture is usually measured quantitatively, that is, by the number of bought and borrowed books, and the same criterion is used to define the type of the reading material. What is less known is who the readers are and what reading actually represents, what the reading experience is, by what it is determined and how it determines the reader – in the long and short run.

Reading may be either a publicly accessible experience through others (through reading aloud for others, through the radio, CD recordings, recitals) or an intimate individual experience, but it is elusive by nature and difficult to analyse. Historically, reading – as demonstrated by Alberto Manguel in *A History of Reading* – developed differently in different cultural milieus. It started with the first records on various media, which kept changing, as did the accessibility of, and attitude to, reading and the written text.

On the one hand, reading has been steadily gaining in importance; on the other, doubts have been raised about its usefulness since the very beginning: philosophical doubts, such as Socrates' claim that the meaning and sense are frozen by reading but opened up by dialogue; religious doubts, which perceive reading as a moral threat (especially to women and children) and as an incentive to heresy (through free interpretations of the written text); and, finally, ideological doubts, according to which books disseminate dangerous ideas jeopardising the social and political order. Moreover, there is the eternal question of whether reading serves to introduce us to real life (whatever that means), or to alienate us from it.

By virtue of its durability and possibility of endless re-reading, the written text in itself becomes a precious materialised knowledge, capable of being appropriated, and thus an extremely powerful tool or weapon; access to the written texts, literacy, and the ability to understand and interpret are one of the chief factors of supremacy.

The history of reading is full of adventures at the micro level as well: at the level of personal encounters with the book from our earliest childhood, when the book – still a picture-book – is already a magic object containing and revealing a whole world, to our being read to by others. This is followed by a (sometimes painstaking) struggle for the acquisition of reading ability and thus for independence, for the right to an (inner) reading voice of one's own, to an independent choice and understanding of one's reading material. This is the stage at which fiction becomes part and parcel of our psyche and our views of the world, a formative element whose weight is extremely difficult to estimate either scientifically or personally. The psyche as a *tabula rasa* – if such a thing exists at all – is soon written over by so many readings, even long-forgotten ones, that their palimpsests seem quite illegible, almost literally imprinted on our bodies as well; who knows how many women readers have unconsciously imitated a gesture described in such detail by Henry James, or how many men readers the attitude of the hero from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*? Would it be exaggerated to claim that we passionate readers are largely made up of the fictions on the pages through which we have leafed in our lives?

What is the endless attraction of reading? Reading satisfies an inherent human need – not only for an explanation of the world which surrounds us, but also for the possibilities of essence and existence, for the infinite number of lives and destinies which are not ours but which we nevertheless want to know, to understand, to perceive through the book, both in the way dictated by the author and outside it, supplying our own conceptions and views. In this respect, the book is incomparably more "democratic" than the film: the features attributed by my imagination to the Marquise de Merteuil in reading Laclos' *Liaisons dangereuses* could not have been identical with any of those envisioned by a million other readers, even though we discussed for hours which real person she might have resembled. With his choice of Glenn Close for the role, however, film director Stephen Frears cemented her image for all of us. All our individual imaginative visualisations of her character were washed away by an hour's training into a single chosen

face; none of us remembers “our” Marquise any longer. The world has shrunk by a million variants.

The endless possibilities of interpretation, as elusive as the reader's unconscious visualisations, point not only to the open nature of literature but also to the personal nature of reading, to the readers' personal “prequels” and previous knowledge, both of which determine the outcome, our attitude to reading and to the text read: the conceptions formed by readers all over the world while reading the novel *The Tale of Genji*, written around 1000 AD by the Japanese woman writer, Lady Murasaki Shikibu, must be largely a collection of unlikely fantasies, wholly unrelated to the remote Japanese culture of a thousand years ago. And yet this vessel called a novel enables people beyond space and time to introduce their own understanding, their own identification on the common ground and their wonder at the differences, which are coherent enough to produce a sense out of the text read. The thought of what Lady Murasaki might have made of all these senses is no less fictional than the novel itself.

The author thus writes beyond his or her world and time; by its very nature, literature is potentiality, a possibility that someone will read it and animate it through their reading in ways which the author could never have dreamt of. The things written down often elude the authors themselves, their conscious intentions. When the author reads his own work, when he is the one who “understands” it best as its creator, it is always necessary to consider the other part which eludes him, written without his being aware that it may generate other senses, which are only realised by the readers with their numerous perspectives. Interpretation is always a work-in-progress, not only through historical and social time but through individual time as well – you never step twice into the same book as the same person.

Are some readings more relevant than others? Certainly they are, even at the purely formal level of recitation, as has been amply proved by the tradition of the Vilenica readings: the authors wrestle with their rhymes to the best of their ability, some more and others less successfully, sometimes with unexpected emphases, which remind us of the

lost oral origin of poetry. At the same time, many are very sensitive to the renditions of their poetry by others.

The level of semantic interpretation holds no less ambiguity: how does the common reader read in contrast to the “authorised” reader, that is, to the expert, analytical reader? Does the latter always read in the same way, regardless of his or her various capacities as literature teacher, librarian, editor, language consultant, bookseller, critic? Or does he consider a book in the context of other books as teacher while recognising its market value as editor, its linguistic weaknesses as language consultant, and the superficiality of its content as critic? The views of this diverse expertise, which accompanies a book from its creation and entry into “public” life to its final placement in (or outside) literary history, define the choice of reading, the school literary canon, the offer of published books on the market – all influenced by a mixture of knowledgeability, (financial) interests, and, last but not least, purely personal tastes and inclinations. Entire segments of the literary production (genre-, geography-, gender-based) may be thus either overlooked or aggressively promoted.

After centuries of steady expansion of reading, the developed part of the world is already facing a reversal, a decline in classic reading on the part of the youngest generations, which is being replaced by computer “reading” – primarily browsing. How will education be affected by this selective, partial reading on the Internet, which brings more information but fewer integral texts, fewer in-depth analyses and syntheses? What will be the culture and society of the future, when the illiterate underprivileged part of the world's population is joined by a mass of people made literate through computers alone, while classic literacy is most likely to be in decline? Will such education be capable of thinking humanity, democracy, art?

This question will probably have to be asked countless times.

Translated by Nada Grošelj

Udeleženci
Panellists



Foto © Bojan Velikonja

Tanja Lesničar-Pučko, Slovenija / Slovenia

Tanja Lesničar-Pučko se je rodila leta 1960 v Mariboru. Diplomirala je leta 1986 iz primerjalne književnosti in francoskega jezika s književnostjo na Filozofski fakulteti v Ljubljani. Med letoma 1983 in 1987 je sodelovala v ženskem alternativnem gledališču PPF, od leta 1987 pa je zaposlena v časopisni hiši *Dnevnik*, najprej kot prevajalka, od leta 1991 pa kot novinarka in kasneje kolumnistka. Med letoma 1995 in 2003 je bila urednica literarnih recenzij. Leta 2009 je pri založbi Modrijan izšel izbor njenih kolumn s področja umetnosti, kulture, politike in etike z naslovom *Na preži*, ki jih je od leta 2002 pisala za istoimensko rubriko v *Dnevniku*. Od 1986 do danes je iz francoščine prevedla vrsto filozofskih, socioloških in leposlovnih besedil, med drugim dela E. Ciorana, G. Bachelarda, N. Bourriauda, G. Deborda in E. Orsennaja.

Tanja Lesničar-Pučko was born in 1960 in Maribor, Slovenia. She graduated in comparative literature and French language and literature from the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana in 1986. She was active in the alternative women's theatre PPF between 1983 and 1987, and has been working for the *Dnevnik* newspaper publishing group since 1987 beginning as a translator, later moving on to the position of journalist and columnist in 1991. Between 1995 and 2003, she was head of the literary review section. A collection of her articles on art, culture, politics, and ethics, which she had written for the *Dnevnik* daily since 2002, was issued by the Modrijan publishing house in 2009 under the collective title *Na preži* (On Guard). Since 1986, she has translated quite an array of philosophical, sociological, and literary texts by many renowned authors, such as E. Cioran, G. Bachelard, N. Bourriaud, G. Debord, and E. Orsenna.



Foto © Mira Dimova

Kristin Dimitrova, Bolgarija / Bulgaria

Kristin Dimitrova je bila rojena leta 1963 v Sofiji v Bolgariji. Diplomirala je iz anglistike in amerikanistike na Univerzi sv. Klimenta Ohridskega v Sofiji, kjer danes predava kot docentka na Oddelku za tuje jezike. Med letoma 2004 in 2006 je bila urednica tedenske priloge časopisa *Trud* za umetnost in kulturo (*Art Trud*), leta 2007 pa kolumnistka pri dnevniku *Klasa*. Je pesnica, pisateljica, scenaristka, esejistka in prevajalka, ki je do sedaj objavila deset samostojnih pesniških zbirk, od katerih sta bili *A Visit to the Clockmaker* (Obisk pri urarju, 2005) in *My Life in Squares* (Moje življenje v kvadratih, 2010) objavljeni izključno v angleškem jeziku. Prva je izšla na Irskem, druga pa v Veliki Britaniji. Napisala je tudi roman z naslovom *Сабазий* (Sabazius, 2007), za katerega je prejela državno nagrado Hrista G. Danova za književnost, ter dve zbirki kratkih zgodb: *Живот и смърт под кривите круши* (Življenje in smrt pod ukrivljenimi hruškami, 2004) in *Тайният път на мастилото* (Skrivnostna pota črnila, 2010). V bolgarščino je prevedla izbrane pesmi Johna Donna. Za svojo poezijo je prejela pet različnih bolgarskih državnih nagrad za najboljšo pesniško zbirko leta, za prozo pa tri. Njena dela so bila prevedena v dvajset jezikov in objavljena v 24 državah.

Kristin Dimitrova was born in 1963 in Sofia, Bulgaria. She graduated in English and American Studies from the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, where she currently works at the Department of Foreign Languages. She was an editor of *Art Trud*, a weekly art and culture supplement for the daily newspaper *Trud*, between 2004 and 2006, and a columnist for the daily newspaper *Klasa* in 2007. The poet, writer and translator, is the author of ten books of poetry, among which *A Visit to the Clockmaker* (2005) and *My Life in Squares* (2010) were issued in English exclusively. The first was published in Ireland, while the other was issued in the UK. She has also written the novel *Сабазий* (*Sabazius*, 2007), for which she was honoured with the Hristo G. Danov National Literary Award in 2008, and two collections of short stories: *Любов и смърт под кривите круши* (*Life and Death under the Crooked Pear Trees*, 2004) and *Тайният път на мастилото* (*The Secret Way of the Ink*, 2010). She also translated a selection of poems by English metaphysical poet John Donne into Bulgarian. Her poetry has won her five Bulgarian national poetry-of-the-year awards, and her fiction three. Her works have been translated into 20 languages and published in 24 countries.



Foto © Sven Paustian

Aris Fioretos, Švedska / Sweden

Aris Fioretos se je rodil leta 1960 v Göteborgu na Švedskem. Študiral je v Stockholmu, Parizu in na Univerzi Yale. Po svojem literarnem prvencu, zbirki lirične proze z naslovom *Delandets bok* (Knjiga deljenja, 1991), je objavil več zbirk proze in esejev, kot so *Den grå boken* (Siva knjiga, 1994), *En bok om fantomer* (Knjiga o fantomih, 1996) *Vanitasrutiner-na* (Običaji nečimrnosti, 1998), *Skallarna* (Lobanje, 2001) in *Vidden av en fot* (Širok kot stopalo, 2008). Prvemu avtorjevemu romanu *Stockholm noir* (Iskalka duš, 2000) sta sledila še *Sanningen om Sascha Knisch* (Resnica o Saschi Knischu, 2002) in *Den siste greken* (Poslednji Grk, 2009), za katerega je med drugimi nagradami prejel pred nedavnim še nagrado Švedske radiotelevizije (Sveriges Radios Romanpris) za najboljši roman leta. Fioretos je znan tudi kot prevajalec del Paula Austerja, Friedricha Hölderlina in Vladimirja Nabokova v švedščino. Njegove knjige so bile prevedene v nemščino, francoščino, nizozemščino, angleščino, grščino in romunščino. Živi in ustvarja v Stockholmu in Berlinu.

Aris Fioretos was born in 1960 in Gothenburg, Sweden. He studied in Stockholm, Paris, and at Yale University. After his literary debut with a collection of prose poetry entitled *Delandets bok* (The Book of Imparting, 1991), he has published a series of volumes of prose and essays, such as *Den grå boken* (*The Gray Book*, 1994/1999), *En bok om fantomer* (A Book about Phantoms, 1996), *Vanitasrutinerna* (The Vanity Routines, 1998), *Skallarna* (The Skulls, 2001), and *Vidden av en fot* (As Wide as a Foot, 2008). His first novel, *Stockholm noir* (2000), was followed by *Sanningen om Sascha Knisch* (*The Truth about Sascha Knisch*, 2002/2006) and *Den siste greken* (The Last Greek, 2009), for which he recently, among other prizes, also received the Swedish Radio Novel Award (Sveriges Radios Romanpris). Fioretos is also known as the translator of works by Paul Auster, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Vladimir Nabokov into Swedish. His books have been translated into German, French, Dutch, English, Greek, Romanian, Polish, and Serbian. He lives and works in Stockholm and Berlin.



Blaže Minevski, Makedonija / Macedonia

Blaže Minevski se je rodil leta 1961 v Gevgeliji v Makedoniji. Diplomiral je iz novinarstva na Univerzi sv. Cirila in Metoda v Skopju. Je pisatelj, dramatik, scenarist in novinar *Nove Makedonije*. Dela tudi kot urednik založniškega sektorja v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici sv. Klimenta Ohridskega v Skopju. Njegova najpomembnejša dela so romani: *Балкан за деца* (Balkan za otroke, 1996), *Требаше да се сликаме пред да се замразиме* (Morali bi se fotografirati, preden smo se zasovražili, 1998), *Приказна за третиот* (Zgodba o tretjem, 2003) in *Нишан* (Tarča, 2007), za katere je prejel najvišje državne nagrade za prozo: nagrado Staleta Popova, makedonski roman leta in nagrado 13. november mesta Skopje za izjemne dosežke na področju književnosti. Objavil je tudi pet zbirk kratke proze: *Солзи во очите на тате* (Solze v očkovih očeh, 1984), *Ниски вежби* (Nizke vaje, 1988), *Заседи за белиот сон* (Vdori v beli sen, 1992), *Ледно око* (Ledeno oko, 1996) in *Сезона на глуварките* (Sezona regrata, 2001). Za slednjo je prejel Racinovo priznanje za najboljšo prozno delo leta 2001. Kot plodovit pisec odrskih del je največ priznanja kritikov in občinstva požel z dramami *Крик* (Krik, 1991), *Лулка* (Zibelka, 1992), *Женски прилог за ноќта* (Ženski prispevek k noči, 1993), *Подготовки за добра смрт* (Priprave na dobro smrt, 1994) in *Немушит јазик* (Zaumni jezik, 2000). Omenjene drame so z drugimi njegovimi že leta 2000 izšle tudi v skupni zbirki z naslovom *Бивши луѓе* (Nekdanji ljudje). Njegova dela so bila v okviru številnih antologij prevedena v deset jezikov.

Blaže Minevski was born in 1961 in Gevgelija, in the Republic of Macedonia. He obtained a degree in journalism from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. He is an author, playwright, screenwriter, and a journalist at the *Nova Makedonija* newspaper. He also works as editor of the publishing department at the National and University Library “St. Kliment Ohridski”. His most important works are the novels *Балкан за деца* (Balkan for Children, 1996), *Требаше да се сликаме пред да се замразиме* (We Should Have Taken a Photo before We Started Hating Each Other, 1998), *Приказна за третиот* (A Story about a Third Party, 2003) and *Нишан* (The Target, 2007), which have won him several prizes, such as the Stale Popov Award, the Macedonian Novel of the Year Award, and the “13th November” Award of the City of Skopje for high achievement in literary arts. He has also written five books of short stories: *Солзи во очите на тате* (Tears in Daddy’s Eyes, 1984), *Ниски вежби* (Low Exercises, 1988), *Заседи за белот сон* (Ambushes into the White Dream, 1992), *Ледно око* (An Icy Eye, 1996) and *Сезона на глварките* (Dandelion Season, 2001). The latter won him the Racin Award for the best book of prose in 2001. A prolific author of stage works, he has achieved both critical and fan acclaim for plays such as *Крик* (The Shriek, 1991), *Лулка* (The Cradle, 1992), *Женски прилог за ноќта* (The Female Contribution to the Night, 1993), *Подготовки за добра смрт* (Preparations for a Good Death, 1994) and *Немушит јазик* (Dumb Language, 2000). These and all his other plays have been published as a collection under the title *Бивши луѓе* (Ex-People, 2000). As part of several anthologies, his work has been translated into ten languages.



Eseji
Essays



Kdo bere?

Kristin Dimitrova

Ko so letos grški kmetje blokirali našo skupno mejo, sem na televiziji videla intervju z voznikom kamiona, ki je za več dni obtičal v petkilometrski koloni. Ko so ga vprašali, s čim si med čakanjem krajša čas in ali bere knjige, je vzkliknil:

»Knjige? Nisem ne pisatelj ne pesnik, zakaj bi torej bral knjige?«

To je bila spontana in odkrita formula, kdo naj bi bral. Če naj si že kateri koli del družbe oprta knjižno breme, potem morajo to očitno storiti tisti, ki so odgovorni za pisanje knjig – prijazno morajo zaokrožiti sliko in knjige tudi brati. Približno štirideset let zatem, ko je Roland Barthes oznanil smrt avtorja, izumira še bralec oziroma je pregan v posebno profesionalno kategorijo. Kam je izginil užitek ob branju? Koliko bralcev danes še sploh obstaja?

Statistični podatki morda ne povedo dosti, vendar se mi zdijo na tem mestu uporabni. Po podatkih raziskave o bralnih navadah Bolgarov Alpha Research jih 27,4 % sploh ne bere, 14 % se zdi branje zapravljanje časa, 20 % pa jih nikoli v življenju ni kupilo knjige. Vsak dan jih bere 9,5 %, kar je manj kot leta 2006, ko jih je bilo 11 %. V razponu med knjižnimi molji in zavestnimi nasprotniki branja se torej znajde kar 63,1 % pasivnih, napol predramljenih ali povprečno navdušenih bralcev, ki priznavajo, da po knjigi sežejo enkrat tedensko ali še bolj poredko. Knjige v Bolgariji pa tudi drugod tekmujejo za pozornost s televizijo, spletnimi socialnimi mrežami, videoigricami, filmi, skratka, z vsem, kar je vizualno, interaktivno in kar odpira boljše poti za komunikacijo. Ni narobe, da ohranjamo stike s prijatelji in popolnimi tujci po svetu – to je pravzaprav privilegij, ki ga ni imela še nobena generacija doslej. Poudariti želim le, da so v zatonu bolj prefinjeni načini dekodiranja pisnih besedil. Na množični ravni izgubljam svoj dolgoročni spomin ter zmožnost koncentracije in reflektiranja.

Vendar se je treba zavedati neke posebnosti v družbeni sestavi bolgarskih bralcev. Tisti, ki berejo, niso vedno tudi tisti, ki kupujejo knjige. Posamezniki z nizkimi prihodki imajo morda visoke intelektualne standarde, vendar berejo povečini knjige, ki si jih lahko izposodijo, medtem ko si lahko obiskovalci knjigarn z debelejšo denarnico privoščijo drage ilustrirane izdaje, ne da bi sploh vedeli, v katerem jeziku so napisane. Druga posebnost bolgarskega založništva je davek na knjige, ki znaša 20 % in je izenačen s splošno davčno stopnjo, zato s tem bralec na neki način finančno podpira svoje manj radovedne sodržavljanke. Izvedenih je bilo že nekaj kampanj za ozaveščanje o tej problematiki in dejstvu, da je npr. v Angliji ta davek enak 0, v večini evropskih držav pa znaša 7 %. Če pomislimo, da bolgarski jezik govori manj kot 7,5 milijona ljudi, je ta poziv več kot smiseln. Ko pa problematika enkrat priplava na površje, brž pristavijo svoj lonček še peki in farmacevti, in sicer z argumentom, da so kruh in zdravila prav tako pomembni kot knjige. Četudi tega ne rečejo sami, njihova stališča s pridom izkorišča že nekaj generacij vlad in jih uporablja kot argument proti ukinitvi DDV-ja na leposlovje. »Pisano je: Človek naj ne živi samo od kruha.« (Luka 4,4) Pa vendar, ko se moramo odločati med kruhom in pisano besedo, ponavadi zmaga kruh. In vse ostane po starem.

Splet, ki ga tako pogosto krivijo, da je izpodrinil knjigo, pravzaprav deluje kot povezovalni člen med premožnejšimi in revnejšimi literarnimi navdušenci, a le v skupini mladih urbanih uporabnikov. Zanj sta v prvi vrsti potrebna spletni ponudnik in osebni računalnik – kar pa je investicija, ki si je mnogi mladi še zmeraj ne morejo privoščiti, njihovi starši pa si je ne želijo. Denar je postal dejavnik delitve na bralce in gledalce televizije. Zadnjih dvajset let so knjige neopazno zdrsnile iz kategorije osnovnih potrebščin v kategorijo dodatnega razkošja.

Ali splet podpira literaturo? Po mojem mnenju jo. Olajšuje namreč komunikacijo med avtorji, odpira prostor za komentarje, spodbuja nastanek skupin oboževalcev in spletnih časopisov, vse to pa pripomore k oblikovanju literature in njeni priljubljenosti. Pred kratkim sem bila članica žirije spletnega literarnega razpisa s 167 prijavami. Ne bi rekla, da je bila večina udeležencev posebej načitana, vendar so se vsi znali

zelo dobro pisno izražati, kar za udeležence klasičnih razpisov »na papirju« pogosto ne velja. Splet morda pomaga pri izboljšanju branja ali tudi ne, vsekakor pa spodbuja pisanje.

Ne strinjam se, da je prehod od državno vodenega gospodarstva k tržnemu izpodrinil knjigo. V poznih 80-ih letih sem bila tik po diplomii dve leti zaposlena kot učiteljica. Ena mojih nalog je bila obiskovati učence na domu in poročati o njihovih bivalnih pogojih. Podala sem se torej v novozgrajeno sošesko in obiskovala stanovanje za stanovanjem, si ogledovala bleščče čiste prostore, vzorno postlane postelje in grizljala pecivo, s katerim so me pogostili. V dolgi vrsti stanovanj pa me je zmotila samo ena stvar – dnevne sobe so bile sicer primerno opremljene s knjižnimi omarami, v njih pa je bilo zelo malo knjig, če sploh kakšna. Police so bile povsod okrašene z vazami, spominki, čajnimi servisi, portreti, punčkami in kristalnimi skodelicami, z eno samo izjemo: fantov ded je bil profesor geologije. Pa se krivde ni dalo pripisati ne spletu ne kabelski televiziji ne videoigricam ali 3D-filmom.

Torej celo v tistih, od knjige odvisnih časih knjige niso bile vseprisotne. Očitno se celi množici prijaznih in spodobnih ljudi pač ne zdijo nepogrešljive. Kupujejo sicer knjižne omare, a se jim ne zdi potrebno, da bi denar zapravili še za nekaj tako nekoristnega, kot so knjige. Ti spodobni ljudje so zvesto poslušalstvo navidezno informativnih televizijskih šovov, ki mejijo na propagando in so bili nekoč izključno politični, danes pa so povečini politični in za to plačani. Ti ljudje so najbolj dovzetna ciljna publika različnih reklam. Marljivo se udeležujejo volitev in si prizadevajo za čim boljšo prihodnost svojih otrok. Saj to počnemo vsi. Včasih, še posebej ob pomanjkanju zanesljivih orodij za interpretacijo, pa mine kar nekaj časa, preden se izkaže, kdo se pretvarja in kaj je za koga najboljše.

Prelomno leto 1989 je sprožilo pravo knjižno eksplozijo; knjige so se, še vroče iz tiskarne, prodajale kar na ulicah in ljudje so se zgrinjali okrog prodajalcev. Osrednji trg v Sofiji, *Ploščad Slaveikov*, se je spontano prelevil v ogromno knjigarno z dolgimi vrstami uličnih stojnic s provizoričnimi strehami iz plastične folije. Če nikjer nisi našel določene knjige, si se odpravil na *Ploščad Slaveikov*. V zgodnjih 90-ih letih so

naklade dosegale med 100.000 in celo 150.000 izvodi. Videti je bilo, kot da je književnost nenadoma pridobila trume novih oboževalcev ali kot da so se skriti bralci zbudili iz zimskega spanja. Nič od tega ni bilo res. Ljudje pravzaprav niso iskali literature, ampak informacije. Obstajal je seznam prepovedanih avtorjev (npr. Aleksander Solženicin), prepovedanih knjig (*Fašizem* Želja Želeva), neželenih žanrov (senzacionalne in pustolovske zgodbe) in prepovedanih tem (okultno). Tako so knjižno polico enakovredno zasedale knjige, katerih prodaja je šla v tisoče: *1984*, *Forever Amber*, *The Sun Signs of the Zodiac* in učbenik *TOEFL*. Senzacionalne zgodbe in burleskne pogovorne oddaje niso dosti zaostajale in željna nova publika se je kmalu naučila, da so bolj zanimive od knjig, kot je na primer *Pot v hlapčevstvo*.

Sčasoma se je situacija normalizirala, kar koli že to pomeni. Letni obseg knjižnega trga v Bolgariji danes znaša približno 67 milijonov evrov (130 milijonov levov), s čimer je primerljiv z obsegom kavnega trga. Od preko 3000 založniških hiš jih je dejavnih okoli 200, od teh pa jih le 81 ustvari približno 80 % produkcije. Osem založb je res velikih. Danes je naklada 2000 izvodov za roman že zelo dobra oziroma, bolje rečeno, je že tvegana. Protistrup za to implozijo pokriva širši spekter interesov. Če bi si pobliže ogledali seznam najbolje prodajanih knjig, ne bi bili več tako prepričani, da je literatura res dobila bitko. Na vrhu namreč kraljujejo knjige s področja računalništva, ekonomije, vzgoje otrok, hujšanja, tehnik samozdravljenja, izboljšanja spolnega življenja in prerokovanja ter karierni priročniki, čeprav še nikoli prej ni izšlo toliko naslovov in še nikoli ni bilo boljših knjigarn – vsaj v velikih mestih.

Iz angleščine prevedla Ana Jasmina Oseban

Who Reads?

Kristin Dimitrova

During the Greek farmers' blockade at our common border earlier this year, I watched a brief TV interview with a truck driver stuck for days in the five kilometre queue. When asked what he does with his time, just waiting there, and whether he read books, he exclaimed:

“Books? I am neither a writer, nor a poet, why on earth should I read books?”

This was a spontaneous and sincere formula for who should read. If the burden of books should be carried by any section of society, then obviously those who are responsible for writing them must kindly round up the process by reading them. About forty years after Roland Barthes declared the death of the author, the reader is about to become extinct as well – or at least banished into a special professional category. What happened to the pleasure of spending time with the book? How many readers are left nowadays?

Statistical figures might not say much but I still find them useful to quote. According to a recent Alpha Research inquiry into the reading habits of Bulgarians, 27.4% do not read at all, 14% consider reading a waste of time and 20% have never ever bought a book. Those who read every day are 9.5%, having dropped from 11% in 2006. The difference between the regulars and the conscientious objectors leaves a 63.1% limbo of passive, semi-active or half-heartedly aspiring readers who reach for a book once in a week or less, according to their own admission. Books in Bulgaria, as much as everywhere else, compete for attention with television, online social networks, video games, films and practically everything that is visual, interactive and offers a better channel of communication. There is nothing wrong about keeping in touch with friends and total strangers all over the globe; it is a privilege no generation before us had. The point here is that the fine art of decoding written text is on the wane. On a mass

level we are losing our long-term memory, along with our capacity for concentration and reflection.

A peculiar feature of the Bulgarian reading audience's social composition must, however, be kept in mind. Those who read are not always those who buy books. People of scarce means might have high intellectual standards but keep mostly to what they can borrow while well-to-do bookstore customers can spend money on expensive albums without knowing the language they are written in. Another special feature of the Bulgarian publishing business is that the value added tax for books is 20%, exactly as for everything else, so in a way readers pay to support their less inquisitive fellow-countrymen. Several campaigns have been made to change the situation by pointing out that the same tax in England, for instance, is 0, while in most European countries it is about 7%. Keeping in mind that Bulgarian is spoken by less than 7.5 million, the plea seems more than reasonable. Once the topic is brought up, however, the bakers and the pharmacists start their own campaigns as well, asking whether bread or medicines are not more important than books. Even if they don't do so, their stands have nevertheless been used by a long succession of governments as an argument against removing VAT for literature. "It is written that man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4:4) but when the choice comes down to bread or what is written, usually bread wins. And nothing changes.

To some extent the internet, so often criticized for killing the book, bridges the gap between the affluent and the poor literary fans, but only within the group of young urban users. It needs at least a provider and a pc – an investment many youngsters still cannot afford, while their parents rarely dream of doing it. Money has become a factor in distributing the roles of readers and TV watchers. During the last twenty years books have imperceptibly moved from the category of necessities to the category of arbitrary expenditures.

Is the internet a friend of literature? In my opinion, it is. It facilitates communications between authors, offers space for commentaries, creates fan groups, gives birth to online magazines – all of these being concomitant factors of literature, but they, however, make it much

more lovable. I was recently a judge at an online literary competition with 167 entries. I wouldn't say that most of the participants were too deeply read in what had been written before them. Yet they all have mastered a fluency in writing, unparalleled in regular send-your-work-on-white-A4-paper competitions. The internet may or may not help towards deep reading, but it definitely helps writing.

I wouldn't claim, however, that our transition from state administered to market economy suffocated the book. In the late 80s, right after graduation, I worked for two years as a school teacher. One of my duties was to visit my pupils' homes and report about their living conditions. So there I was, walking about the newly built neighborhood, visiting flat after flat with perfectly clean rooms, well made beds and a welcoming piece of cake prepared in my honor. There was just one strange thing about all those flats. Their living rooms were duly furnished with bookcases, but they contained very few books if any. The shelves, as a rule, bore vases, souvenirs, tea sets, portraits, dolls and crystal bowls, with one exception only: the boy's grandfather was a professor of geology. There was no internet to blame, nor cable TV, nor World of Warcraft, and the 3D movies were yet to come.

So even in those book-dependent times books were not omniscient. Obviously a lot of nice and really decent people have never considered them as an indispensable part of their wellbeing. They remember to buy bookcases but never go as far as spending money on something so infirm in terms of utility as books. These decent people are the trustful audience of ostensibly informative TV shows, verging on propaganda, which were once purely political and are now mostly political and paid for. They are the diligent target audience of commercials. They vote to the best of their abilities and hope for the best future for their children. We all do. But in some cases, when one lacks dependable instruments for interpretation, it takes a really long time to find out who is lying and what is best.

The changes in 1989 brought a literary explosion, a kind of publishing orgy when books were sold in the streets, hot off the press, and people crowded around the book vendors. A central square in Sofia,

Ploshtad Slaveikov, was spontaneously converted into a huge bookstore, with rows of street stands and makeshift nylon roofs. If you couldn't find a book anywhere, you went to *Ploshtad Slaveikov*. During the early 90s larger editions were in the neighborhood of 100,000 copies and 150,000 were not a surprise. It looks as if literature had suddenly won a host of fans or that some hidden readers had been awakened from hibernation. Neither was true. People were not really looking for literature, but for information. So far there had been lists of forbidden authors (like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn), forbidden books (like *The Fascism* by Zhelyu Zhelev), unwanted genres (sensation and adventure) and forbidden topics (the occult). So, *1984*, *Forever Amber*, *The Sun Signs of the Zodiac* and the *TOEFL* textbook comfortably shared the same book stall and sold in thousands. Sensational papers and burlesque talk shows were not far behind, and the new eager audience soon learned that they are much more fun than *The Road to Serfdom*, for instance.

Gradually things went back to normal, whatever that means. The annual market of books in Bulgaria today is about €67 million (130 million leva) which makes it comparable to the coffee market. There are more than 3,000 publishing houses, about 200 of them active and 81 of them turning out 80% of the production. Eight of them are the real big ones. Now an edition of 2000 for a novel is considered lucky, or risky rather. The antidote to this implosion is covering a wider range of interests. If we take a closer look at the bestseller list, we wouldn't get too optimistic that literature has won the battle. The top favorites are mostly computer, market, baby-raising, get-slim, cure-yourself, improve-your-sex-life, see-your-future and find-your-best-career manuals, but there have never been more titles and better bookstores. In the bigger cities at least.

Nežni intervali (Samo nekaj točk)

Aris Fioretos

Dva spomina. Eden jasen: deset let imam, mogoče enajst, in po šoli leže berem na postelji. Dva, trije novi deli serije Wahlström & Widstrands mladinskih knjig in knjig za fante, tiste z zelenimi platnicami. (Leto kasneje, ko sem prebral vse zelene, sem presedlal na rdeče. Potem je prišla na vrsto Christie, kmalu zatem Poe. In otroštva je bilo konec.) Kot običajno sem iz zmrzovalnika ukradel lučko. Po vsaki knjigi vstanem, spustim glavo in pustim, da mi gre kri v glavo. To je sreča. Razbijaanje v sencih odšteva izgubljeni čas. Druge ure ni. Senca so ura pismenih. Potem – sprva ne slišim – ugotovim, da nekdo že lep čas trka na vrata. Verjetno brat ali sestra. Medtem ko se odpravim na hodnik, me preplavita dve znani čustvi: najprej jeza, da so me zmotili, potem pa slaba vest zaradi ukradenih sladolegov. Pri vratih izgineta obe druga za drugo, medtem ko v želji, da bi ustavil trkanje, dvignem roko, da bi hkrati odprl in potrkal nazaj. Steklo na vratih se razleti na koščke in urežem se tik ob žili. Kri, krik, žalost. Trije šivi v regionalni bolnišnici.

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Zakaj ta spomin, tako trivialen, tako privaten? Mogoče zato, ker kaže, da je čas, ki ga čutim, vsaj kar zadeva moj odnos s knjigami, vedno negiben. Raztegnjen, ko enemu premoru sledi drugi. Razbijaanje v sencih, zlomljeno zapestje. (Telo kot metronom.)

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Ko berem, še danes v ležečem položaju, doživljam razsežnosti ne v času, temveč v prostoru. V horizontali nisem več »opica, človek, ptič niti riba«, kot piše Josip Brodski, »ampak dobim geološke značilnosti«. Moje telo in njegove skrbi postanejo plasti, globoke nekaj sežnjev tam, kjer

to besedilo tvori površino. Teorije o besedilu kot o palimpsestu – dokumentu, v katerem različni zapisi in pomenske plasti obstajajo v neke vrste sočasnosti – le redko upoštevajo to okoliščino. Ampak ali ni telo, ko bere, metonimija za živo skalo?

*

Ko neka knjiga vzbudi naše zanimanje, zanemarimo okolico in pozabimo na telo. Ena roka zaspi, noge postanejo mrzle, vse nas začne boleti – tako vem, da je čas minil. Fizična bolečina je odpustek. Pristane kot telefonsko sporočilo sredi predvajanja poročil, ko odkrijejo najnovejšo vest.

*

Torej, je to vse ... Ta možnost, na katero me telo pripravi, da retroaktivno preštejem dolžino, v najboljšem primeru pozorna pozabljivost? Pravzaprav ne. Ko berem, ne zapustim (omejenega) fiziološkega sveta, da bi vstopil v neke vrste napisano (permanentno) kraljestvo sreče, kjer sem rešen kostnih spon, svoboden, da uživam v družbi duhov *v* prej kot *med* nekoristnim prostorom. Med branjem se telo nahaja »tam«. Pogosto zazna nestrpnost, ko me roman prisili na dolgo pot, ali temperaturno razliko, ko naraste vročina ob skritem poglavju. *Nakazuje* zgodbo. Le kdo se še ni, popolnoma zamaknjen, popraskal po laseh, si vrtal po nosu, medtem ko je bral?

*

To je točno to: bereš samo, ko si jaz-v-resnici-ne-jaz. To bi morale pojasniti občutek navdušenosti, ki te lahko zaobjame v družbi knjig: branje je obljuba o eksistenci, odrešeni okov identitete. (To nima veliko skupnega z »identifikacijo« s to ali ono osebo iz romana. Ko berem, se prepustim nenadzorovanemu trenutku iluzije, da je mogoče uiti omejenosti lastnih možganov.)

*

Majhen dokaz. Če so besede in misli na eni strani skrbno koreografirane, je zmeraj dovolj prostora za bralčevo sodelovanje. On ali ona ne začneta zares plesati z njimi, ampak vseeno začitata, da vzorec, ki se izrisuje, upošteva prisotnost bralcev – *enega* bralca. Galantno besedilo pa hoče biti občudovano. Kot petelin, ki ne pleše s posamezniki, ampak se pokaže samo skupinam, ki imajo srečo. Bralec tako ostane brez soplesalca. Pred slabo spletenim besedilom (če se zaveda oblike ali če je »naivno«) povesi bralec svoj pogled iz drugega razloga. Tako besedilo se še ni naučilo, da morajo nekaterim korakom slediti drugi, čisto določeni. Samo skrbno načrtovan zapis dopušča nedokončanost. Pri tem sodeluje tudi bralec. Nekateri knjige morajo biti napisane kot dvoranski ples, druge kot tango, spet druge se vrtijo v neskončnem krogu, ampak razmerje med besedilom in branjem je vedno *pas de deux*. (Beckettova besedila o razcapancih kažejo, da tudi klateži plešejo odlično.)

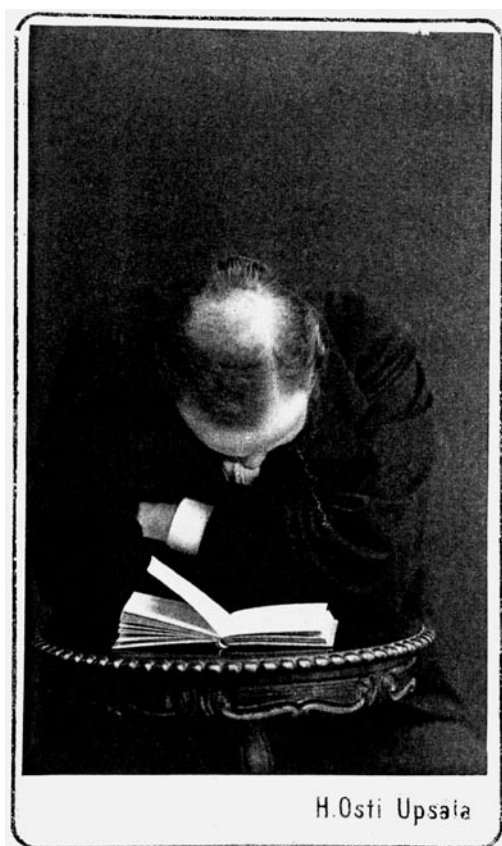
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Beremo drugače, če stojimo ali sedimo, kot če ležimo? Seveda. Kakšno vprašanje. Gotovo obstajajo taki, ki se jim zdi stoječe branje nesramno, ležeče branje pa pregrešno. Zanje ima sedeče branje – ko je telo enako aktivno in pasivno – pravo mero pozornosti tiskane besede. Zame pa je tako branje še zmeraj preveč šolsko. Ostaja odvisno od zahtev, ki prihajajo od zunaj. (Kot pri mučnih urah latinščine, ko moraš prepoznati stavčne člene: vsaka minuta dolga kot večnost.) Govorim vedno, ko hodim, pišem, ko sedim, berem vedno, ko ležim.

*

Obstaja fotografija nekega »H. Ostija«, ki je del fotografske zbirke univerzitetne knjižnice v Uppsali. Za nekaj kron jo lahko v osrednji zgradbi Carolina Rediviva kupiš kot razglednico. Slika prikazuje »človeka, ki bere,« in je bila verjetno posneta na prelomu stoletja. Mož sedi ob majhni, okrogli mizi, sklonjen nad knjigo. Na sebi ima črno

obleko. Vidimo eno manšeto (levo), med nosom in prekrižanimi rokami pa se svetlika oklep. Brez očal, brez klobuka. Namesto tega pa velikodušno kaže svojo rastočo plešo, medtem ko zamaknjen v besedilo sklanja glavo navzdol. Neke vrste svetniški sij kmečke družbe. Večina bi prepoznala postavitev: tako beremo, ko si vzamemo čas, da vključimo nekaj v svoje znanje, mogoče celo v svoj način bivanja. Človek in knjiga sta dve ločeni stvari, položaj telesa pa kaže na zgodbo, ki se jo je tovrstno branje naučilo od: hranjenja. Ujet v pozo med eleganco in obrokom se človek prehranjuje z duhovno hrano. Fotografija H. Ostija prikazuje branje kot hostijo.



H. Osta: *Lasande man* (Človek, ki bere), ok. 1880,
Univerzitetna knjižnica v Uppsali.

*

V šestih kratkih razmišljanjih, lakonično naslovljenih *Essen* (Hrana), Walter Benjamin opisuje različne jedi. V eni opisuje boršč. Vrela hrana ovije obraz tistega, ki jé, v vlažno masko, ko se ta skloni nad krožnik. Še preden poskusi hrano, ga ta že požre. Boršč pogoltne jedca. V juhi se vrtinčijo rdeči kosmiči, stopljen sneg – obrnjena nebesa za lačne. Boršč je edina jed, ki te nežno nahrani, trdi Benjamin, uspe mu celó prodreti v célo telo. Pred tako »hrano, nežno kot oblaček človeške sorte,« naj bi se ognili vodki in pirogom. Ta hrana je začinjena samo s »ščepecem začimb žalosti«.

(Rahla alegorija na razmerje med besedilom in bralcem.)

*

Tako drugačna, kot so Ostijeve fotografije, pa ni študija Vilhelma Hammershøija *Interier z mladim bralcem* iz približno istega obdobja. Mladenič stoji ob oknu, nagnjen proti rumeni zavesi, ki bi prav tako lahko predstavljala okvir slike. Tudi ta človek je oblečen v črno. Poškrobljen ovratnik in manšeta se svetita belo. Obe barvi ujameta kontrast med belim stolom in rjavo-črno pisalno mizo desno od bralca, na mestu, kjer piše. Mladenič je dvignil eno obrv, desno, ki je bliže oknu in svetlobi, približno tako kot takrat, ko pozorno prisluškuješ besedi ali izjavi. Z obema rokama drži knjigo, levi palec verjetno sledi branju vrstico za vrstico. Kmalu ga bo ob obračanju strani zamenjal kazalec. Mogoče se pomika po poeziji, albumu ali knjigi z aforizmi, v vsakem primeru pa je v drži mladega moškega sled spoštovanja. Zapis se nahaja v varnih rokah in dvignjena obrv riše širitev – neskončnosti – previdega cirkumfleksa nad opreznim očesom. Kljub mladosti vse kaže na to, da je bralec izobražen. Brez dvoma je dovolj zrel, da lahko pravilno oceni napisano in ga prilagodi glede na stil, tradicijo, tip besedila. Čez deset let, mogoče manj, in po nekaj potovanjih po celini se bo prelevil v pravega sladokusca.



V. Hammershøi: *Interiør med ung lesende mand*
(Interier z mladim bralcem), 1898, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Kopenhagen.

*

Ostijev bralec sedi, Hammershøijev stoji. Eden se zlije z besedilom, drugi ga okuša. Je to socialna razlika? Reči hočem: Ali lahko nekdo, ki je meščanskega izvora, samo pomisli, da bi stal in bral? Reči hočem tudi to: Ali je vertikalna pozicija za različne člane družbe, vsaj tiste na prelomu stoletja, povezana z drugo dejavnostjo, z »delom«, ki bi si bolj zaslužilo svoje ime? Težko se je o tem izjasniti. Kaj bi bilo v tem primeru s horizontalnim bralcem? Lenuh s kavča! Nepripravljen ali nezrel, da se podredi anatomskega praviloma socialnega življenja, ima raje horizontalno pozicijo, navado, ki si jo deli z mrtvim, ljubimcem in analitikom – tremi odločno asocialnimi elementi. Oblomov je vendarle odkril alibi, ki drži.
(Bohemska romantika.)

*

– Po vsem tem lahko zaključimo, da ti branje pomeni počasnost, dogodek, ki je počasen kot premik kontinentalnih plošč na robu zavesti. – Morda. Ampak s tem, kar je Roman Jakobson imenoval »umetnost počasnega branja«, s filologijo torej, to nima veliko skupnega. To, zaradi česar je branje verjetno počasno, je ravnodušnost do prisile, da se nekam pride. Ko berem, nočem ničesar opraviti. Seveda me lahko kakšen pisatelj kriminalke (Kerr, Vachss, Paretsky) pripravi do tega, da obračam strani vedno hitreje, ker hočem ugotoviti, kdo je moril, kdo je kradel ali kaj podobnega. Ampak zadovoljstvo, ki ga doživljam, ko ležim na postelji, *hočem imeti* dejansko takrat, ko berem. – Filologija je torej disciplina, ki zahteva potrpljenje in čut za sledenje. – Ne, ko berem na primer *A Philosophical Investigation* (od Kerra, ne od koga drugega), nočem iskati namigov, dvomiti v odkritja ali natančno preučevati dokaze. To bi bilo branje, ki išče za znakom. Besedilo bi bilo tako samo medij, v katerem bi preizkušal verjetnost resničnosti. To, kar me zanima, to, kar me torej drži v šahu, je lahko v tem tipu besedil samo vprašanje, kako so stvari povezane. – Drama samega znaka, torej? – Če bi kot filolog natančno pregledal šive, bi se napetost izgubila. Pomembno torej je, da se ne bere ne prehitro ne prepočasi. Branje, tudi trivialne literature, je vprašanje ritma.

*

»Če bereš prehitro ali prepočasi, ne razumeš ničesar,« je trdil Pascal v maksimi, ki jo je Paul de Man sprejel kot moto v eni od svojih knjig in ji tako dodelil teoretično vrednost. Z branjem, tem neskončnim opravkom, je tako kot z anekdoto. Če prehitro hlastaš, ostane samo poanta, slabo zastavljen vic brez končnega momenta. Če pa si prepočasen, zgubiš nit in se znajdeš v klobčiču zmršenih niti. Samo če bereš pozorno, lahko najdeš pravi tempo med živčnim hitenjem in polžjo počasnostjo. Samo tako lahko uho razloči med glasom besedila in šumenjem, samo tako te lahko nagovori v najglobljem smislu. Samo takrat je literatura smiselna.

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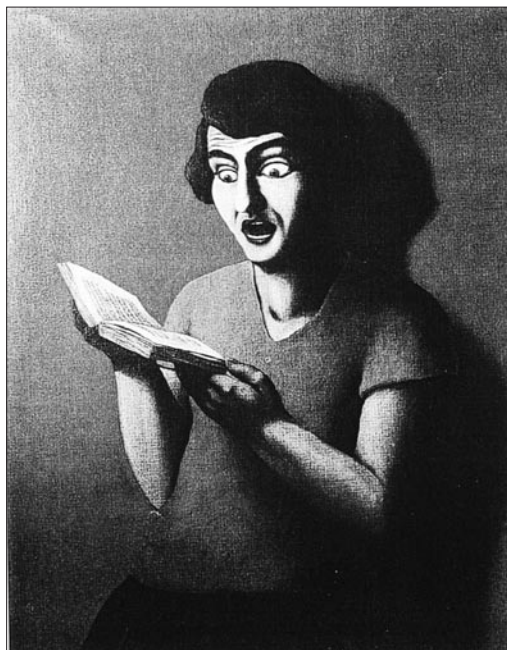
Mogoče bi lahko trdili, da tako branje ne nalaga sodbe, temveč raje ponuja dokaze. (Trditve so že na ogled.) S popustljivostjo to nima skoraj nič skupnega, s pozornostjo skoraj vse. Običajno ne govori samo o spoznanjih, temveč jih poleg tega še bolj odkrije. Dokazovati ni enako kot imeti – ali želeti imeti – prav. Dokazovati pomeni govoriti resnico. Tako stališča kot stiki so branju tuji – mogoče ne tuji, ampak malo nenavadni. Kot bi zahtevali nekaj, kar ne ustreza njegovi izvornosti, skoraj tako, kot če bi plavalca prisilili, da plava po suhem. Prvniski bralec raje živi – oziroma *doživlja* – skupaj z literaturo. Njegove akcije notranje vodi element, recimo mu besedilo, ki ga ne moremo ločiti od bralca. Teorije pa pravzaprav niso nič drugega kot rokavčki.

*

Običajno se tisti, ki bere stoje, čez čas vsaj usede. Telo to zahteva. Branje sledi zakonom gravitacije. Kdo pa še ni izkusil, kako začneš po kakšne pol ure branja sede počasi toniti vse globlje v fotelj? Na koncu se vdaš in se postaviš v vratolomno pozicijo in porazdeliš telo po površini, ki je manjša od polovice te dolžine. Branje: hommáge vretencem (Brodski). Končno: nepremični čas.

*

Nekaj o gravitaciji ali: o-zamrznjenem-branju-kljub-vsemu-dogajanju. Prijatelj mi pošlje iztrgan list iz almanaha. Na prvi strani je precej neznana slika Magritta *La Lectrice soumise* iz 1928. Prikazuje žensko, ki je v gibanju zaradi branja knjige. Na zadnji strani lista ugibam, za kateri zapis bi lahko šlo. Mogoče gre za trilersko serijo o Fantomu, nepremagljivem mojstrskem zločincu, ki je uročil francosko bralstvo, ki je prva desetletja stoletja kar požiralo feljtone. Mogoče pa za *Maldo-rorjevi spevi*, poskus Lautréamonta, da bi zapel hvalnico zlobne lepote.



R. Magritte: *La Lectrice soumise* (Pokorna bralka), 1928, zasebna zbirka.

Ženska na Magrittovi sliki se naslanja na zid in njene poteze nas pustijo lebdeti v nevednosti, ali ne uživa v najbolj srhljivi stvari. Poševno iz leve sveti na sliko temnomodra svetloba. Vir te poševne svetlobe je verjetno električen; taka se zdi ta umetna svetloba. Pravzaprav bi bila slika precej konvencionalna, če ne bi bilo te hladne, brezsrčne svetlobe. To je prav gotovo poslednja postaja pred ultimativno nočjo. Takoj ko odložim strgan list – dejstvo, da gre za časovne znake, mi ne uide – me zadane, da žensko mogoče proti njeni volji zadržujejo pri knjigi. Zdi se, da se odmika od tistega, kar bere, in se obenem ne more rešiti knjige. (Knjiga, »ki te pritegne«, kot se reče.) Zenice počivajo kot majhne, črne krogle globoko v široko odprtih očeh, svinčenih očeh. Nad njimi se bočijo beločnice, potem pridejo visoke obrvi in nato še horizontalna linija razumevanja (gube na čelu). Toda zenice – polne tistega, kar morajo brati – zamrznjene od groze.

*

Proti koncu romana *Ada ali strast*, v poglavju s slavnim odlomkom o vidiku časa, Nabokov o negibnosti pravi naslednje: »Čisti čas, Zaznavni čas, Otipljivi čas, Čas brez vsebine, povezave in tekočega komentarja – to je *moj* čas, moja tema. Vse ostalo je številčni simbol ali samo kak vidik Prostora. Tkivo Prostora ni tkivo Časa, in pisano marogasta štiridimenzionalna različica, ki so jo vzgojili relativisti, je štirinožec, ki so mu eno nogo nadomestili s prividom noge. Moj čas je tudi Negibni čas (takoj se bomo ločili od 'tekočega' časa, časa vodnih ur, časa vodnih stranišč).«

*

– Pa se morda ne zapletaš v protislovje? Mar čas za branje ni vprašanje tempa, kakor tudi nečesa negibnega, okretnega in, no, togega obenem? – Kot sem dejal: branje se raztegne le, ko enemu premoru sledi drugi. Tako je zaznamovano v času. In tempo ... Glede vprašanja tempa – čuta za takt – pa drži, da je z njim isto kot z občutkom za ritem. »Morda je ritem edino, kar namiguje na zaznavanje Časa; ne pravilno ponavljanje udarcev ritma, temveč vrzel med dvema takšnima udarcema, siva vrzel med dvema črnima udarcema: Nežni interval.« (*Ada ali strast*)

*

Uležem se na posteljo, prelistam zapiske, ki sem jih naredil. Vsakič, ko obrnem stran, jih vidim: trije šivi na notranji strani zapestja. Spomnijo me, da je telo meja za nepremični čas. To je moj drugi spomin.

Prevedla Sara Grbović

Tender Intervals (Just a Few Points)

Aris Fioretos

Two memories. The first, an early one: I am ten years old, maybe eleven, lying on the bed after school, reading a book. Two or three new volumes of the Wahlström & Widstrand's books for boys series, the one with the green spines. (A year later, after I had used up all the green ones, I would move on to the reds.) Then came Agatha Christie, and Poe after her. Whereafter childhood ended. As usual, I nibble at an ice lollypop from the freezer. I get up after every book, lower my head, and let the blood flow into my head. This is bliss. The throbbing temples count the time vanished. There is no other clock. My temples are the chronometer of reading. But then – at first I do not hear it – it dawns on me that someone must have been knocking on the kitchen door for some time. Possibly one of my siblings. While I walk into the hallway, two familiar feelings arise: first, anger about having been disturbed, then remorse for having snatched the icy delight. As I reach the door with the intent of putting an end to the knocking, at once raising my hand to open up and hammering back, they short-circuit one another. The glass pane shatters; I cut myself flush against the artery. Blood, clamour, tribulation. Three stitches at the hospital.

*

Why this memory – so trivial, so private? Maybe because it shows that the time I perceive, at least as far as dealing with books is concerned, is always immovable. It gains extension only when one interruption is followed by another. Throbbing temples, dodgy wrist. (The body as a metronome.)

*

When I read, still preferably while lying on my back, I experience an extension not in time but in space. Horizontally, I am no longer “an ape, a man, a bird, or even a fish”, as Joseph Brodsky put it, but “of a geological denomination”. My body and its efforts have turned into strata some fathoms deep in the layering of which the text presently provides the surface. Theories regarding the text as a palimpsest – a document in which varying layers of writ and meaning co-exist in some sort of simultaneity – consider this conjuncture rarely. But is the body, when you read, not a metonymy for the Archean rock?

*

When a book awakens our interest, it makes us disregard the world and forget the body. An arm falls asleep, feet turn cold, joints gradually start to hurt – this is how I know that time has passed. Bodily discomfort teaches me a lesson. It flutters in like phone messages during a news broadcast, revealing a present beyond the actual.

*

Still, is this all? This opportunity, provided by my body, to measure retroactively the length of an attentive oblivion at best? Hardly. When I read, I do not leave the (finite) physiological world to enter some (permanent) Xanadu of writ – freed from the prison of mortal remains, free to enjoy the company of spirits *in* rather than *during* a futile space of time. While reading, the body is “there”. Often it registers impatience whenever a novel forces me to suffer digressions, a change in temperature when things heat up in some tucked-away chapter. That is, it *prompts* the plot. Who has never ruffled their hair absentmindedly or picked their nose while immersed in the story?

*

That is just it: one only reads as I-in-the-capacity-of-not-me. Which explains the feeling of exuberance that may overcome one when in the presence of books: reading is the promise of an existence freed from the fetters of identity. (This has little to do with “identifying” with one or the other character in a novel. When I read, for an unguarded moment I surrender to the illusion that it might be possible to escape the narrowness of my own brain.)

*

Small piece of proof. If the words and thoughts on a page are choreographed with enough care, there is always room for the reader’s collaboration. He does not begin to dance with them, but nonetheless senses that the patterns are drawn with regard to the presence of the reader – *one* reader. A gallant text, on the other hand, wishes to be admired. It resembles the rooster that does not dance with individuals, but prefers to show itself off to lucky groups. The reader is reduced to a wallflower. Confronted with a text poorly put together (whether it is form conscious or “naïve”), the reader lowers his sight for a different reason. Such a text has not yet learned that some steps can only be followed by certain others. Solely the carefully coreographed text tolerates the unfinished. Here the reader takes part. Some books may be written like a ballroom dance, others like a tango, yet others follow the rave’s infinite loops, but the relation between text and reading is always a *pas de deux*. (Beckett’s outcast texts reveal that bums, too, are excellent dancers.)

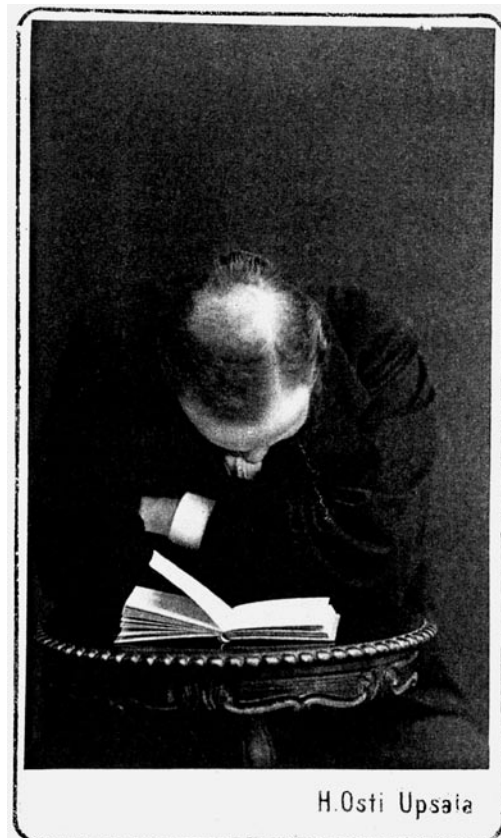
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Do we read differently while lying down than when standing or sitting? What a question. Of course. Probably there are those who regard reading while standing as rude, and reading while lying down as sinful. To them, reading while sitting – when the body is as active as passive –

seems to correspond to the right degree of respect for the printed page. To my mind, this habitus still smacks too much of a school desk. It remains dependent on external demands. (Like the agonizing Latin classes with their laborious unfolding of syntactical elements; every minute as long as an eternity.) I prefer to speak when I walk, write when I sit, and only read while I am lying down.

*

There is a photograph by one “H. Osti” which is included in the photograph collection of the Uppsala University Library. You can get it for a handful of kronor as a postcard at the Carolina Rediviva.



H. Osti: *Lasande man* (Man Reading), 1880s, Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek

The picture shows a “man reading” and was probably taken at the turn of the century. A male person is sitting at a small, round table, hovering over a book. He is wearing a black suit. We can see one of his cuffs (the left), and recognize a shirt-tail between nose and folded arms. No glasses, no hat. Instead he generously reveals his burgeoning bald spot, as he, lowering his head, is absorbed by the writ. A peasant halo of sorts. The majority would recognise the posture: this is the way we read when we take the time to incorporate something into our knowledge, maybe even into our means of existing. Man and book are separate entities, but the position of the body reveals the action from which this manner of reading has learned: eating. Caught in a pose between grace and meal, the person on the photograph obtains intellectual nourishment. H. Osti’s photograph depicts reading as communion bread (or *hostia* in Swedish).

*

In six short meditations, laconically entitled *Essen*, Walter Benjamin depicts various dishes. In one he describes a borscht meal. The steaming food covers the faces of the indulger with a “mask of vapour” as he bows over the plate. Before even attempting to try the food, he is devoured by it. The borscht “swallows” the eater. In the soup, red flakes are spinning around, molten snow – an inverted heaven for the hungry to dive into. Borscht is the only dish that satiates you gently, Benjamin remarks. Nonetheless it manages to permeate the body completely. Before such a “cloudy meal of the manna family”, vodka and pierogi are best to be abstained from. This is endless nourishment, seasoned only with a “pinch of that herb called sadness”.

(Small allegory on the relationship between text and reader.)

*

How different from Osti's photograph is not Vilhelm Hammershøi's study *Interior with Young Man Reading*, stemming from the same period. A young adult is standing at the window, leaning towards a yellow curtain, which could very well represent the frame of the picture. He, too, is wearing black. The high starched collar and the cuff are shining white. Both colours capture the contrast between the white chair and the brown and black escritoire to the right from the reader, the latter the place where one writes. The young man has an eyebrow raised, his left, which is closer to the window and the light, like when one pays close attention to a word or a phrase. He is holding the book with both hands, the left thumb probably following the reading line by line. Soon



V. Hammershøi: *Interior med ung læsende mand* (Interior with Young Man Reading), 1898, Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen

it will be replaced by the index when the page must be turned. Perhaps he peruses a poetry album or a collection of aphorisms. In any event, the posture reveals traces of discernment. The script is in safe hands and the raised eyebrow draws the careful circumflex of elongation – of infinity – above the attentive eye. Despite his youth, everything indicates that the reader is well educated. Without a doubt he is experienced enough to assess what has been written appropriately and categorize it according to style, tradition, a class of texts. In ten years, maybe less, and after a few trips to the continent, he will be a connoisseur.

*

Osti's reader sits, Hammershøi's is standing. One consumes the script, while the other savours it. Is this a social difference? That is to say: Is it only somebody of educated bourgeois origin who would stand while reading? Which is – also – to say: Is the vertical position for the remaining members of society, at least for the one at the turn of the century, connected to another activity, to a kind of “work”, which would deserve this label more? Hard to say. What, then, would a horizontal reader be? A slacker! Unwilling or unable to submit to the anatomic rules of social life, he prefers the horizontal position, a habit he shares with the dead, the lover, and the analyst – three other asocial elements. Finally, Oblomov has found an alibi that holds.

(Bohemian romantics.)

*

– From this one might conclude that, for you, reading implies slowness, an event as slow as the shift of continental plates at the edge of awareness. – Perhaps. Yet this has not much in common with what Roman Jakobson once dubbed “the art of reading slowly” – that is, with philology. That which possibly causes reading to be slow is the indifference to the coercion of needing to get somewhere. When I read, I do not wish to accomplish anything. Of course crime fiction (Kerr, Vachss, Paretsky) may bring me to turn the pages progressively faster because I

want to find out who the thief or murderer is, or whatever it is I wish to know. But I want the sense of well-being which I perceive while lying in my bed to *endure* when I am reading. – So it is philology after all, the discipline that requires patience and a good nose. – No. While reading *A Philosophical Investigation* (by Kerr, that is, not the other one), I am not interested in analyzing the clues, to query the evidence, or to pick apart the argumentation. This would be a manner of reading which searches beyond the sign. The text would just become the medium in which I test the probability of reality. As far as such types of text is concerned, what intrigues me, that is, what keeps me captivated, can be solely the question of how the plot is put together. – You mean the drama of the signs themselves? – If, like the philologist, I would inspect it in too great detail, the suspense would vanish. It is a matter of reading neither too fast, nor too slowly. Reading, even of popular literature, is a question of pacing.

*

“If you read too fast or too slowly, you understand nothing,” Pascal claimed in a maxim, which Paul de Man mobilized theoretically by using it as a motto for one of his books. With reading, this infinite task, it is the same as with the anecdote. If you rush, only the punch line will remain – a misfired joke without resonance. If you move too slowly, however, you lose the thread in a tangle of twists. Only if you read attentively you’ll find the proper tempo between haste and sluggishness. That is the only way the ear may filter the voice of the text out of the murmur, only so it speaks to us. And only then literature matters.

*

Perhaps it could be argued that such a manner of reading does not decree a verdict, but rather gives a testimony. (At least the point has been made.) This has little to do with complaisance, and all to do with attention. Often it does not merely convey insights, but betrays them

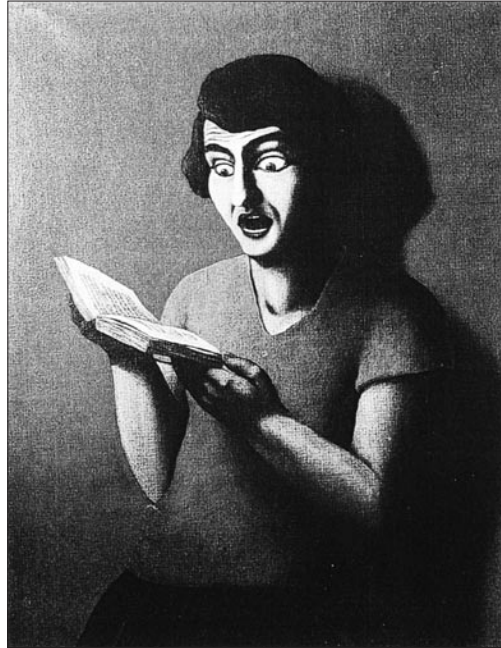
to boot. To testify is not tantamount to getting it – or even wanting to be – right; to testify means to tell the truth. Both argument and report are alien to reading – or perhaps not alien, just a little odd. It is as if we were to demand something that does not correspond to its peculiarity, sort of like as if we would force the swimmer up on dry land. A genuine reader prefers to live with and within – that is, *to experience* – literature. His actions are conducted within an element, let us call it text, from which he cannot be separated. Theories are nothing other than arm floats.

*

He who reads while standing usually sits down after a while. The body demands it. Reading, too, is subject to the laws of gravity. Is there anyone who has never experienced slowly sinking into the armchair after half an hour of reading? In the end, you settle for a daredevil stunt of arranging your body to fit a surface less than half its size. Reading: “an homage to vertebrae” (Brodsky). Finally: immovable time.

*

Regarding gravity, or: About-the-frozen-time-of-reading-despite-all-movement. A friend sends me a page torn out of an almanac. The front of the page contains a relatively unknown painting by Magritte: *La Lectrice soumise* from 1928. It depicts a woman moved while reading a book. The back of the page contains a speculation on which title it might be. Perhaps the book could be a part of the thriller series about Fantômas, the inveterate master criminal, which mesmerised French roman-feuilleton readers at the beginning of the century. Or it might be *The Songs of Maldoror*, Lautréamont’s attempt to extol the beauty of evil. The woman in the painting stands leaning against a wall; her facial features reveal that she is just learning about horrors most tremendous. A dark blue light is falling obliquely over the image from the upper left. The incidental source



R. Magritte: *La Lectrice soumise* (The Compliant Reader), 1928, private collection

of illumination must be electric; such is the appearance of artificial light. Magritte's painting would be conventional, were it not for this heartless light. Depicted is the last stop before Ultimate Night. Just before I put that torn piece of paper away – the fact that it is a time mark has not escaped my notice – I realise that the woman might be held by the text against her will. She appears to cringe before what she is reading, all the same, she is incapable of freeing herself from the book. (A “captivating” script, indeed.) Her pupils rest like weights of lead deep down in her wide open eyes. The eyeballs arch above them, next the eyebrows raised up high, followed by the horizontal lines of worried grasp (the furrows on her forehead). But the pupils: burdened by what they are forced to read, dread has rendered them immobile.

*

Near the end of *Ada, or Ardor*, in the part containing the famous section about the texture of time, Nabokov writes about immobility: “Pure Time, Perceptual Time, Tangible Time, Time free of content, context, and running commentary – this is my time and theme. All the rest is numerical symbol or some aspect of Space. The texture of Space is not that of Time, and the piebald four-dimensional sport bred by relativists is a quadruped with one leg replaced by the ghost of a leg. My time is also Motionless Time (we shall presently dispose of ‘flowing’ time, water-clock time, water-closet time).”

*

– Are you not enmeshing yourself in contradiction? Is the time of reading supposed to be a question of tempo as well as of something immovable, both agile and, well, rigid? – As I said: reading gains extension only when one interruption is followed by another. This is how it is marked in time. And the tempo ... As for the question of tempo – the sense of pace – it is as it is with the feeling for rhythm. “Maybe the only thing that hints at a sense of Time is rhythm; not the recurrent beats of the rhythm but the gap between two such beats, the grey gap between black beats: the Tender Interval.” (*Ada, or Ardor*)

*

I lie down on the bed, skim through the notes I have scribbled. At every skim, I see them: three stitches on the underbelly of my wrist. They remind me that the body is the boundary for the immovable time. This is the second memory.

Translated from the Slovene by Janko Jemec



Branje kot ritem srca (Splošna teorija o branju in ne-branju)

Blaže Minevski

Če hočemo brati, potrebujemo teorijo o branju. Branje brez teorije je površno. Teorija mora biti prepričljiva in znanstvena. Za različne ljudi so seveda prepričljive različne znanstvene teorije. Zato potrebujemo več teorij. Vsaka teorija pa mora upoštevati dejstvo, da je branje alternativna možnost v razmerju z ne-branjem, zato brati pomeni – imeti rešitev za ne-branje. Tokrat je naša teorija o branju teorija o ritmu srca, ki je praktično najboljše ohranjen v epskih ljudskih pesmih oziroma v ritmu verza, največkrat osmerca ali deseterca. A o tem kasneje. Preden pojasnimo »svojo« teorijo o branju in ne-branju, moramo namreč najprej javno priznati, da je »naš« tako imenovani uvod v to temo z manjšimi improvizacijami, nastalimi zaradi negotove teorije pomnjenja, v celoti izposojen iz splošne teorije Leszka Kołakowskega o ne-obdelovanju vrta. Obdelovanje vrta bi tako bilo metafora za branje, ne-obdelovanje pa metafora za ne-branje. Ampak kaj je pravzaprav branje? Je branje poslušanje ali gledanje v besedilo? Kako »poslušamo« besedilo, če ga beremo v sebi? Kako v tišini branja merimo ritem besedila in kako ta ritem vpliva na ritem srca? V antični dobi so se otroci učili brati na glas, tako pa so brali tudi odrasli in le majhen del ljudi je znal brati v sebi. Vsakdo je torej bral glasno ali pa je to namesto njega počel služabnik. Preko lastnega ali preko služabnikovega glasu se je dalo slediti čustveni vsebini vsake prebrane besede. Jon-Roar Bjørkvold meni, da je srčni ritem vedno lepo usklajen s semantiko besed in njihovim čustvenim nabojem. Če nekdo npr. bere opis narave, je ritem njegovega srca upočasnjen, umirjen in enakomeren, če pa bere opis kakšne krvave bitke ali vročega ljubezenskega prizora, se ritem njegovega srca pospeši, postane neenakomeren in veliko hitrejši od običajnega. Takšna usklajenost utripa s semantiko besedila in njegovim čustvenim nabojem se seveda da izmeriti, čeprav to v bistvu sploh ni potrebno.

Vsakdo namreč sam začuti spremembe ritma glede na besede, ki jih bere, in čustva, ki jih odkriva, ko »koplje« po besedilu kot po vrtu Kołakowskega. Bistvo takšne reakcije srca je v »energiji zablode«, kot bi rekel Tolstoj, ali v energiji vznemirjenja, preneseni preko pisateljevega peresa oziroma računalniške tipkovnice kot najmodernejšega sredstva za tehnični prenos besedila. Ali ritem zvoka, ki se sliši ob pisanju s peresom na papir ali pri uporabi računalniške tipkovnice, vstopa v naboj besed, ki tvorijo neko določeno literarno delo? Za večino je ta zvok del čustvenega naboja, vsebovanega v vsaki besedi, ali pa bi bilo, kot bi rekel kakšen sodobni Nietzsche, morda dobro, ko bi se zvok tipkovnice, ojačan kot pri branju na glas, lahko slišal. Ko bralec poslušata ta zvok, poslušata ritem pisatelja, zvok tipkanja pa je seizmograf pisateljevih misli. Če bralec sledi temu ritmu, je njegova energija na isti ravni kot pisateljeva in obratno. Zato veliko pisateljev čuti potrebo, da med delom prebira svoje delo na glas, da preverja ritem besedila preko zvoka vsake besede v stavku. Zato na primer Dostojevski ni le bral, temveč je tudi pisal na glas. Daniel Pennac ugotavlja, da je Dostojevski pri pisanju romana *Zločin in kazen* takoj potem, ko je kriče narekoval svojo obtožbo proti Razkolnikovu, čisto potihoma vprašal Ano Snitkino Grigorjevno, soprogo - daktilografko, kakšna bo obsodba. Ana je za trenutek prekinila s pisanjem in mu odgovorila, da bo Razkolnikov spoznan za krivega. Nato je Dostojevski glasno narekoval obrambo in na koncu spet zahteval njeno mnenje. Soproga - daktilografka mu je tokrat rekla, da bodo Razkolnikova osvobodili. Ko je Dostojevski to slišal, je samo izdihnil, pokimal z glavo, češ da se strinja, in se sesedel na zofo. Po zvočni seansi z Razkolnikovim je minilo skoraj pol ure, preden je Dostojevski umiril ritem srca, ki, kot smo rekli, vedno spremlja vsebino besed in njihov čustveni naboj. Zato branje mobilizira ustvarjalno aktivnost bralca v enaki meri kot delo pisatelja. Tudi Flaubert je trdil, da samo zvok besed prenaša njihov celotni smisel. »Smisel se izgovarja, oblika pa se gleda,« je menil. Tako je branje v sebi proces, v katerem gre beseda iz očesa neposredno v možgane, branje na glas pa naredi krog od očesa preko ust v uho in šele potem prispe do možganov, kar pomeni, da je pot daljša, iz česar lahko sklepamo,

da je biostimulacija tistega, ki bere na glas, bistveno večja kot tistega, ki bere v sebi. Tudi moja skromna izkušnja na področju pisateljavanja in branja nemara na nek način potrjuje to teorijo. V vsakem romanu ali drami seveda redno popravljam prve različice, pri čemer glasno prebiram vsak stavek, vsako poglavje, celotno delo. Ritem stavka preverjam prek zvoka semantike besed in njihovega čustvenega naboja, kot bi rekel Jon-Roar Bjørkvold v svojih razmišljanjih o človeku kot nadarjenem bitju. Ker je srčni utrip vedno usklajen s pomenom in naravo besede, se ozvočenje glasno branega stavka nezavedno prenaša, na primer preko noge, s katero sledimo ritmu ozvočenega besedila. Neki glasbeni teoretik je glede na udarjanje ene ali druge noge ob tla, kar bi lahko predstavljalo nekakšen vgrajen telesni metronom, ugotovil, da gre v mojem primeru za fizično podporo sedemosminskega takta, ki je pravzaprav značilen ritem stare makedonske ljudske glasbe. Če je res tako, kar bi bilo treba temeljiteje raziskati, tedaj stavek kot ritmični niz verjetno sledi nekakšnemu mističnemu notranjemu naboju memorirane zvočnosti, ohranjene v trezorjih otroškega spomina. Seveda ritem ni zavestna reakcija na teoretično predpostavko, temveč podedovana čustvena energija besed, memoriranih z ritmom ljudske pesmi, ki je bila okrog mene vedno prisotna. Z glasnim branjem besedila tako v nekaj fazah do končne verzije praktično »ravnamo« tako imenovani »vrt« Kołakowskega oziroma izravnavamo mesta, ki se ne vklaplajo v takt srčnega utripa kot vrojenega metronoma stavčnega ritma, podedovanega kot zvočno memorijo. Glede na to je branje na glas, vsaj s pozicije tistega, ki piše, pravzaprav legitimen ustvarjalni proces, ozvočenje besed v tem procesu pa je svojevrsten in specifičen avtorski postopek. Vsekakor pa je branje, schopenhauersko povedano, tesno povezano z razmišljanjem. Razmišljanje je namreč najpomembnejši in za branje tipičen psihični proces, razmišljanje z glasnim branjem med pisanjem pa je biostimulator tako za organizem kot za možgane.

Kar pa se tiče branja kot obdelovanja vrta ali branja s pozicije »bralca«, obstajata dve vrsti knjig in načeloma dve vrsti branja: umetniška literatura in znanstvena literatura. Tako prvo kot drugo branje je miselni proces, a na ravni fenomena – tako Stefan Kamenov, ki raziskuje

sociologijo knjige in branja – je razmejitev znanstvene in umetniške literature težka, v določenih primerih celo nemogoča. A dejstvo je, da to ne zbrše načelne razlike med znanstveno in umetniško literaturo oziroma med branjem znanstvene in umetniške literature. Znanstvena literatura ima namreč funkcijo, da zagotovi bralcu znanstveno, umetniška pa estetsko informacijo. V umetniški literaturi se ritem bralčevega srca usklajuje s čustvenim nabojem vzvišenega, čudovitega, tragičnega, komičnega občutja, ki pa se ga seveda ne da izmeriti drugače kot z vplivom besed in njihove vsebine na srčni utrip bralca. Toda ali obstaja merska enota za merjenje branja kot estetske kategorije? Ali se meri kvantitativno ali kvalitativno? A. Toffler meni, da je treba za zagotavljanje »visoke kvalitete določene kulture« oziroma visoke ravni kvalitete nacionalne književnosti pisatelje dobro plačati in nagrajevati, obstajati pa mora tudi visok kriterij za vrednotenje, kar pomeni, da mora obstajati možnost za primerjavo z vsaj enim literarnim genijem, umetniška produkcija pa mora biti dobro sprejeta tudi drugod po svetu. To se posebej nanaša na tako imenovane majhne nacionalne književnosti, ki so bolj ali manj polne tako imenovanih lokalnih genijev, ki hote ali ne hote dušijo ozek prostor lastne književnosti, saj ne morejo premostiti niti ene, kaj šele več meja s svojimi »genialnimi« literarnimi deli. Vsako delo je knjiga, ni pa vsaka knjiga delo, zato je tudi Proust ob neki priložnosti dejal, da obstajajo pisatelji, ki so boljši od svoje knjige, vendar pa te knjige niso knjige. Kakorkoli že, ključno vprašanje o utemeljitvi ustreznega estetskega kriterija je torej vprašanje o tem, katera knjiga je umetniško delo. Odgovor je: le tista, ki prinaša estetsko informacijo. Seveda lahko estetsko informacijo izmerimo samo z branjem. Povsem drugo je vprašanje, kako potem to estetsko informacijo izmerimo s tako imenovanim »estetskim kvantom«, s katerim se meri raven umetniške stvaritve pa tudi raven umetniške kulture. Zavoljo razumne uporabe kriterijev za diferenciacijo umetniške literature je potrebno vzpostaviti načelni kriterij za »mersko enoto estetske informacije«. Če ne najdemo pravega estetskega kriterija, lahko pridemo npr. do takšnega absurda, da v knjigi preštevamo vejice, da torej merimo tehnično plat besedila in povsem zanemarimo bistvo

nekega umetniškega besedila oziroma tiste fine usklajenosti srčnega utripa s semantiko besed in njihovim čustvenim nabojem. Če sledimo ritmu srca, in videli smo, da je ta povezan z vsebino vsake prebrane besede, tedaj kot bralci ne potrebujemo nobenih vejic, saj srčni utrip sam zaznamuje mesta za odmor med pomenom besed in njihovo čustveno vsebino. Po drugi strani pa, kot opaža Robert Escarpit, je učenje branja zelo težka dolžnost, saj je neposrednemu opazovanju dostopen le fizični, ne pa tudi psihični akt branja. Po Escarpitu lahko le predpostavljamo, da fizični akt odraža psihični akt branja, v bistvu pa ni čisto tako. V osnovi, meni Escarpit, lahko branje opredelimo kot »dešifriranje pisanega besedila«, kar pa pove bolj malo. Dešifriranje se lahko uresniči na različnih ravneh in lahko razkriva eno ali več kod, uporabljenih v enem in istem besedilu, bralec pa ob dešifriranju vsebine knjige vanjo vgrajuje tudi svoje lastne asociacije in opazovanja, hkrati pa se vrača k svojemu socialnemu in psihičnemu svetu oziroma bogati svoje asociacije in spoznanja skozi samo besedilo. Zato branje ni povezano le z branjem zase, kajti tudi pri branju v sebi molčeči bralec samo teoretično ostaja sam s sabo, ločen od sveta, dejansko pa je povezan s številnimi vezmi, ki jih je okrog njega zgradila družba. Zato brez bralca ne le da ne moremo govoriti o zgodovinskosti književnosti, temveč, kot pravi Hans Robert Jauss, književnost brez bralca sploh ne bi imela svoje zgodovine. Vsako delo se v zgodovinskem trenutku svoje pojavitve odziva na določena pričakovanja, norme, konvencije in odnose v književnosti, bralec pa je vedno isti, torej idealen. Po Sartru je svoboda pisanja apel k svobodi bralca in samo bralec lahko naredi, da neko besedilo spregovori, ali, kot pravi Jauss, samo bralec lahko potencialni smisel dela konkretizira v sodobni pomen, s tem ko v referenčni okvir dela vnese svoja razumevanja sveta. Z drugimi besedami, bralec ustvarja delo po sebi, ko sledi ritmu svojega srca, usklajenega z ritmom pisatelja in lastnih spoznanj o svetu.

In na koncu, ko torej beremo tudi to besedilo, srce ponovno beleži ritem semantike besed in njihov čustveni naboj. Če torej rečemo, da je to splošna teorija o branju in ne-branju, bo srčni utrip samo registriral vsebino besed in njihovo čustveno bistvo, potem pa bodo

morda možgani vprašali: »Ali je branje počitek za lastno razmišljanje, kot pravi Schopenhauer, ali pa je razmišljanje najpomembnejši in tipičen psihični proces prav za branje?« Kakorkoli že, vsaka umetnost je bolj ali manj potrjevanje življenja, branje kot ritem srca pa je najboljši dokaz za to. Seveda skupaj s splošno teorijo o branju in ne-branju in z vrtom, ki je zopet ostal povsem ne-obdelan.

Prevedla Namita Subiotto

Reading as Heart Rhythm (General Theory on Reading and Not-Reading)

Blaže Minevski

Those who want to read need a theory on reading. Reading without a theory is shallow. A theory must be convincing and scientific. Yet to different people, different theories are convincing and scientific. Therefore we need a number of theories. However, each theory must acknowledge the fact that reading is an alternative to not-reading, therefore to read means – to have a solution to not-reading. Here our theory on reading corresponds to the theory on heart rhythm, which in practice is best preserved in epic folk songs, that is to say in their poetic metre, mostly octameter and decameter. But more about this later on. Before we shed light on “our” theory on reading and not-reading, we must make a public confession, namely that “our” so-called introduction to the subject with minor improvisations, which are due to the uncertainties of memorisation theory, is in its totality borrowed from *The General Theory on Not-Gardening* by Leszek Kołakowski. Thus gardening can be said to be a metaphor for reading, and not-gardening for not-reading. What exactly is reading, anyway? Is reading listening or looking at a text? How do we “listen” to a text if we read it silently? How do we measure the rhythm of the text in the silence of reading, and how does this rhythm affect the heart rhythm? In ancient times children were taught to read out loud, and this was how adults read as well, so only a small percent of the entire human race knew how to read silently; each individual used to either read out loud or a servant did the reading instead. Through one’s own or the servant’s voice one could trace the emotional contents of each word as it was read. Jon-Roar Bjørkvold believes that heart rhythm is always in perfect harmony with the semantics and the emotional charge of the words. For instance, if one reads a description of nature, the heart rhythm slows down, quietens and evens out, whereas if he reads about

the progression of a bloody battle or a steamy erotic scene, his heart rhythm speeds up, becomes uneven and much quicker than ordinary. To be sure, this harmonisation of the heartbeat with the semantics of the text and its emotional charge is measurable; there is, however, no need for it, really. Each of us feels changes in the rhythm which are in harmony with the words as they are read, and the emotions as they are discovered while “digging” the text as one would the garden of Kołakowski. The essence of such reaction of the heart lies in the “energy of delusion” as Tolstoy put it, or rather in the energy of excitement transferred from the writer’s pen or a computer keyboard – a modern means of text transfer technology. Does the rhythm of the sound which is heard when a pen is put to paper or when keys are pushed on the keyboard affect the charge of the words that constitute a particular literary work? For most of us this sound is part of the emotional charge embodied in each word; perhaps, a modern Nietzsche might say, it would be good if one could hear keyboard sounds, amplified as in reading aloud. When the reader listens to this sound he listens to the writer’s rhythm, and the sound of typing is a seismograph of the writer’s thoughts. When the reader keeps up with this rhythm his energy is on the same level as the writer’s and vice versa. Therefore there are many writers who feel the need to read their work aloud while they are writing in order to check on the rhythm of the text by listening to the sound of each word in a sentence. This is why Dostoyevsky, for example, not only read out loud but also wrote this way. Daniel Pennac maintains that when writing *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky dictated the prosecution’s closing statement against Raskolnikov in a loud voice to Anna Grigorievna Snitkin, his wife – stenographer, and soon after asked her all but inaudibly what the verdict would be. Anna stopped writing for a moment and answered that Raskolnikov was going to be found guilty. After that Dostoyevsky loudly dictated the closing statement of the defence, and when he was finished once again he demanded her opinion. His wife – stenographer answered this time that Raskolnikov was going to be freed. When Dostoyevsky heard her answer he merely exhaled, nodded his head in agreement

and collapsed on the sofa. After this sonic séance with Raskolnikov almost half an hour passed before Dostoyevsky could calm down his heart rate which, as we have established, always follows the meaning of words and their emotional charge. Reading therefore mobilises the creative energy of the reader to the same extent as does the work of the writer. It was Flaubert who claimed that the sound of words alone can carry their entire meaning. “The meaning is pronounced, whereas the form is observed,” he believed. Reading to oneself is thus a process in which a word passes from the eye directly to the brain, whereas in reading aloud it makes a detour from the eye by way of the mouth to the ear and eventually to the brain. In the latter case the path is longer, from which it can be inferred that bio-stimulation of those who read aloud is much greater than of those who read silently. In a way, my own humble experience as both a writer and a reader may well confirm this theory. It goes without saying that I regularly edit first drafts of my every novel or dramatic piece by reading aloud each sentence, each chapter, the entirety. I check the rhythm of the sentences against the sound of semantics and the emotional charge of the words, as Jon-Roar Bjørkvold said in his musings on humans as talented beings. Since the heartbeat is always in line with the meaning and the nature of words, the melody of a sentence read aloud is subconsciously transferred, for instance by way of a foot keeping up with the rhythm of the voiced text. Upon observations of one or the other foot tapping on the floor, which arguably represents a kind of built-in physical metronome, a musical theoretician ascertained that in my case the physical support is the time signature 7/8 which is in fact characteristic for old Macedonian folk music. If this is the case, which should be explored in more depth, it is likely that a sentence as a rhythmical series follows a mystical inner charge of memorised resonance, preserved in the vaults of the child’s memories. This is not to say that rhythm is a conscious reaction to a theoretical supposition, rather that it is an inherited emotional energy of words, memorised by way of the rhythm of folk music which has always been around me. By reading the text aloud in several stages until the finalised version, we in fact “set right”

the so-called “garden” as Kołakowski called it, that is to say adjust passages out of synch with the heartbeat as an inborn metronome of the sentence rhythm which is inherited as a sound memory. In this regard, at least from the viewpoint of the writer, reading aloud is in fact a legitimate creative process, and equipping words with sound as part of this process is an original, specific authorial procedure. Reading, in Schopenhauerian terms, is by all means closely related to thinking. Thinking is namely the crucial psychical process and one that is typical for reading, whereas both thinking and reading aloud while writing provide bio-stimulation for both the organism and the brain.

As far as reading as gardening, or reading from the position of “the reader”, is concerned, there are two kinds of books and, fundamentally, two kinds of reading: fiction and non-fiction. To read both is a thinking process, yet according to Stefan Kamenov, who is engaged in research in the field of sociology of the book and reading, to divide fiction and non-fiction on the level of phenomena is hard, in certain cases nearly impossible. This, however, does nothing to erase the fundamental distinction between non-fiction and fiction, or rather between reading one and the other. The function of scientific non-fiction is to provide scientific information to the reader, whereas artistic fiction’s function is to provide aesthetic information. When reading fiction the reader’s heart rhythm is in harmony with the emotional charge of sublime, marvellous, tragic, comic sensations which can be measured exclusively by establishing the impact that words and their meaning have on the reader’s heartbeat. Yet is there a unit of measurement out there to be used for measuring reading as an aesthetic category? Is it measured by its quantity or quality? According to A. Toffler, in order to secure “high quality” of a certain culture, or rather a high-quality standard of national literature, writers should be well-paid and rewarded, and evaluation criteria should be high, meaning that writers must have a chance of comparison to at least one literary genius, and besides, national art production must also be well received in other parts of the world. This refers specifically to so-called small national literatures, all more or less abounding with so-called local geniuses, who – inten-

tionally or less so – smother the narrow space of their own national literature, as they are unable to cross a single border, let alone multiple ones, with their literary “works of genius”. Each literary work is a book, but not all books are literary works, which made Proust observe on occasion that some writers are superior to their books but that those books are far from being books. Be that as it may, the key question for establishing an adequate aesthetic criterion is “Which book is a work of art?” To which the answer is: none other than the one that provides aesthetic information. And the only way aesthetic information can be measured is by reading. The next question is something completely different: How can this aesthetic information be then measured by so-called “quantum aesthetics”, which is used to measure the standards of both, works of art and artistic culture? In order to allow for fiction differentiation criteria to be used sensibly, a fundamental criterion for the “unit of measurement of aesthetic information” should be established. Unless an accurate aesthetic criterion is determined, we could come upon such absurdities as counting commas in a literary work or other technical measurements of a text, with utter neglect for the essence of a work of art which is that refined harmony between the heartbeat on one hand, and the semantics and emotional charge of words on the other. When we keep track with the heart rhythm, which, as we established above, is in harmony with the meaning of every word as it is read, then we as readers need no commas; our heartbeat marks the pauses between the meaning of the words and their emotional contents on its own accord. On the other hand, as Robert Escarpit observes, learning how to read is a very hard task since only the physical rather than psychical act of reading is available for direct observation. To Escarpit, we can merely suppose that the psychical act of reading is reflected in the physical one, yet this is not quite the case. Escarpit points out that reading can essentially be defined as “deciphering a written text”, which is not a very informative definition. Deciphering can be carried out on various levels, and thus one or more codes used throughout a single text can be revealed. When deciphering the contents of a book, the reader also ingrains in it his own associations and

perceptions as they are being enriched through the text, while returning to his social and physical world. Reading has thus to do with more than just reading for oneself; when reading to oneself the silent reader is on his own, separate from the world, only in theory, whereas in effect he is chained with numerous bonds that society has built around him. This is why without the reader not only is there no historical aspect of literature, but, according to Hans Robert Jauss, literature with no readers would remain without its history. In the historical moment of its appearance, every literary work reacts to specific expectations, norms, conventions and relations in literature, whereas the reader always stays the same, i.e. ideal. To Sartre, the freedom of the writer is an appeal for the freedom of the reader, as only the reader can make a text talk, or as Jauss puts it, only the reader can turn the potential meaning of a literary work into specific contemporary significance by instilling his own understandings of the world into the work's referential frame. In other words, the reader creates the work of art in his own image while following his heart rhythm which is in harmony with the rhythm of the writer and the reader's own realisations of the world.

Last but not least, whenever we read, say right now the text before us, the heart repeatedly records the rhythm of semantics and the emotional charge of the words. If we are to say that this was a general theory on reading and not-reading, the heartbeat would merely register the meaning of words and their emotional core, and then the brain might ask: "Is reading a repose to one's own thinking, as Schopenhauer believed, or is thinking the crucial psychological process, one that is typical for reading?" Be that as it may, every art is more or less an acknowledgment of life, and the best proof of it is reading as heart rhythm. Not to mention the general theory on reading and not-reading, and the garden that has again been left altogether not-gardened.

Translated from the Slovene by Manja Maksimovič



