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# SUMMARY

The book, *Strategies of Suspicious Reading*, is a publication stemming from the question on contemporary condition of literary studies as well as the instruments that are nowadays available at its disposal. The diagnosis of the condition of the discipline, regardless of the methodological convictions of the researchers, is as follows: literary studies – as well as the humanities in general – have reached an impasse. Anxiousness about social isolationism, emasculation of the scientific field, concern about delegitimation and marginalisation lead to relentless quest of the motives for the crisis and adequate research methods. It also leads to an attempt to redefine the tasks and delimit anew the value of criticism. The Introduction is devoted to the identification of the current state of the discipline. It presents a panorama of the most recent ways of reading (including so-called “reparative”, “crafty”, “postcritical”, “surface”, “distant”, and “minimal reading”) against the background of the twentieth-century reading strategies. Most frequently indicated reason of the existing state of affairs is a perennial domination of poststructuralist critical theory and its interpretative practice referred to as symptomatic reading or demystifying reading. New reading strategies are often explicitly and considerably resistant to suspicious, critical, and deep reading, of which contemporary masters, as pointed out by Paul Ricoeur, were Marks, Nietzsche and Freud. The solutions advocated recently are for instance the return to philological accurateness (G. Steiner), rhetoric (R. Scholes) and tactful close reading (V. Cunningham), but also to phenomenology (R. Felski), humanistic model of literary education (D. Schwarz) or formalism and structuralism (J. M. Ellis), although even now fervent apologies of

ideology critique and cultural critique originating from Marxism sometimes emerge (V. B. Leitch).

The objective of the book is to investigate selected “suspicious” or “deep” interpretations, collate the advantages and disadvantages of symptomatic reading, to indicate an appeal of such reading as well as hazards connected with it: reading into, manipulating, instructing others. The book also aims at presenting chosen strategies (derived mainly from psychoanalysis and biblical exegesis), with no intention of depicting the entire sphere of hermeneutics of suspicion: for instance the book does not provide an analysis of Neomarxist approaches, Postcolonial and New Historical ones.

The answer to the question about the drawbacks and merits of suspicious interpretation in the twenty-first century was provided after a detailed description of four selected reading strategies: 1) cryptonymic, 2) kerygmatic, 3) semiotic, 4) anagrammatic. The book is composed in a gradual manner: starting from hypersuspicion (concerning politics and social studies) towards permutation of the letters (limited to poetics and literary history). What interweaves the modes of reading and comprehending being presented is the search for the meaning other than that given in direct way and treating the text in terms of a riddle, cipher, hidden message, manipulated meaning which requires disenchantment rather than in terms of a beautiful object being aesthetically assessed, the power to be overcome, imaginative world, in which one can live, or an ethical message.

No matter how appealing and fascinating detective “affairs with the text” are, it seems that the current situation of Humanities is more likely to encourage putting forward more modest critical solutions: showing not so much a creativity of an interpreter as primarily literary craft of an artist (techné, craft) as well as aesthetic side of the work and its existential (but also social, political) significance. Nevertheless, it is not an incentive to banish detective (Panás) or demystifying interpretation (Rashkin). Because the author of the book is strongly convinced that individuality, bravery, subtlety, intuition and knowledge of the researcher – determine the character of literary studies (and teaching literature) which, as G. G. Harpham has recently written, are “personal undertaking” (*The Character of Criticism*, 2006). Thus, it is not a scientific, empirical model (nowadays represented by digital humanities) promoted here, but an individualist, personal one. Instead of *distant reading*, analyzing macrodata, the philological practice of tactful, slow reading – but

not without risk or fancy – is recommended here. The way of modern literary scholar, it seems, is a path between suspicion and sympathy, between fascination and critique.

Translated by Agnieszka Piekarska