The Cinematic Materiality of Theory. Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rivette*

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Almost a century ago Karol Irzykowski observed that cinematic pictures are a form of literary materiality[1], which was in line with the broader context of "subordinating" film studies to literature and linguistic research (in terms of methodology and infrastructure). However, with time it turned out that films offered original and idiomatic means of expression, and hence critics began to talk about a reverse transfer of qualities and inspirations: features that were generally film-related or characteristic of film were subsequently adapted to the needs of literature[2].

Insofar as research into the cinematic materiality of literature – i.e., broadly speaking, research into various film techniques which would, at least theoretically, make literature less "text-centric", seeking extralinguistic values in it – seems to be a noticeable trend in the humanities today (though perhaps not a very popular one), film inspirations or tensions in literary theories are dis-

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[1] See. Karol Irzykowski. *Dziesiąta muza: zagadnienia estetyczne kina* [The tenth muse: aesthetic issues of the cinema] (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1924).

[2] Here the notion of the film editing technique allowing to freely and creatively connect various spatial and temporal sets is an excellent and classic example. See for instance Robert Humphrey. *Strumień świadomości – techniki* [Stream of consciousness in the modern novel], translated into Polish by Stefan Amsterdamski. "Pamiętnik Literacki", No 61/4 (1970), 274 onwards.

cussed far less frequently. Films are often discussed by theoreticians, such as Slavoj Žižek[3], but generally speaking, they much more rarely notice the analogy between materially- or affectively-engaging cinema and the equally cognitively exciting paths of different theories (which sometimes demonstrate that the process of interpretation can resemble solving a crime mystery).

I am not going to look into all the possible "cinematic" engagements of theory (the functioning of films in methodological texts and – in line with the theme of the last volume – cinematic techniques making use of theories in a structural way, rather than in the form of examples of or evidence for the usefulness of a given vocabulary), implications (the types of such functions, the reasons behind them or their consequences), nor exemplifications themselves, for that would obviously go beyond the scope of a single paper. Instead, I would like to focus on one very interesting example – *Out 1 (Noli me tangere)* by Jacques Rivette – which shows not only the incorporation of literature – and theory – into a film (or rather a film extensively inspired by a word and its application in the work), but also reveals a profound analogy between strategies found in literary theory and cinematic means of expression, and determines the material, performative character of various methodological reflections. My paper is also based on the interpretation of this film and its literary contexts (such as the works of Balzac and Carroll) by Gilles Deleuze, a philosopher popular among literary theoreticians.

The film in question is legendary (because of its length, scope and evanescence) and at the same time somewhat forgotten (due to the shockingly low numbers of cinemas showing it and – until recently – to the lack of an official, legal version). The 1971 film is almost 13 hours long, and to a great extent improvised. At almost the same time, a shorter (roughly 4-hour-long) version was made, known as *Out 1: Spectre*; however, neither of the two versions was very popular[4]. Nonetheless, despite its niche and enigmatic character, it is often said to be the *opus magnum* of the French New Wave, a modernist artistic movement focusing on the maximal exploitation of the cinematic form[5].

The film tells the story of two theatre groups: the first one, led by Lili (Michele Moretti) is working on staging *Seven Against Thebes*, whereas the other one, led by Thomas (Michael Lonsdale), Lili's ex – *Prometheus Bound*. The two groups, in spite of dealing with two plays by the same author (Aeschylus) and being led by a former couple – display very different approaches to performative art, and (which would perhaps be of more interest to literature studies) have different attitudes to their plays' lexical layer: the first group is first trying to "enter into" their play through meditation and yoga[6], and then (due to Lili's pressure) to precisely recreate

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[3] See for example Slavoj Žižek, *Patrząc z ukosa: do Lacana przez kulturę popularną* [Looking Awry. An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture]. Translation into Polish by Janusz Margański. Warszawa: KR, 2003.

[4] In Poland, the full version of the film was presented during Rivette's retrospective at Nowe Horyzonty film festival in 2016.

[5] See for instance Rafał Syska, *Światy wewnętrzne* [Internal worlds]. In: *Sekretne światy Jacquesa Rivette'a* [Jacques Rivette's secret worlds]. Rafał Syska (ed.). Kraków: EKRANy, 2017: 67. Basically many New Wave films could be interpreted according to that key (as a reflexive materialization of various theories): there would be enough examples even if we limited them to the most obvious ones, such as films inspired by literature, including *nouveau roman* (Rive Gauche, represented by Alain Resnais) or the equally "intertextual" cinema (similarly to Rivette) connected to "Cahiers du cinéma" by Jean-Luc Godard (especially *Band of Outsiders*, in which one of the protagonists uses – perhaps perversely –Arthur Rimbaud's pseudonym).

[6] For more on the meaning of yoga and body acting in *Out 1* – see Donatella Valente and Brad Stevens. *Jacques Rivette's Out 1: From First to Last – Senses of Cinema*. Date of access: 30.12.2020. https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2016/jacques-rivette/out-1-from-first-to-last/.

the ancient text, which later becomes the reason behind the conflict in the group, ultimately leading to the project's flop. Renaud, a character who is invited to join, proves to be especially destructive to it as he not only challenges the director's artistic vision, but also robs his fellow cast member, which makes the whole cast carry out an investigation (whose results are nonetheless never revealed). The second group works according to Grotowski's method[7]. Early on they try to improvise specific events taking place in the play (for example, they take turns impersonating the bound victim so that they can empathize with Prometheus), almost completely abandoning the text in favor of affective, performative work with the body.

The stories of the two theater groups and their individual members are intertwined with those of other characters. For example, there is Frédérique, a young woman (played by Juliet Berto, whom the director liked a lot), a thief (including confidential information) and blackmailer. She discovers a secret society to which – allegedly – the actors belong. Later, she falls in love with a local gang member and eventually is killed by him. Colin (played by the famous Jean-Pierre Léaud) is another, even more interesting atom-character. For some time, he does not appear in the main story of the film (if we can even talk about the main story in the case of this particular film). He pretends to be a deaf-mute outsider, making a living by chatting up random customers of a local café. He offers them envelopes containing pages torn from random books (probably treating them as "divinations"); he draws their attention by playing a harmonica. Later Colin himself gets such a "letter", which he reads as an encrypted message that he tries to decode and interpret. As a result, he discovers the same conspiracy as Frédérique, known as the Thirteen, and falls in love with Pauline, who owns a niche book store, which is a meeting place for Parisian anarchists. However, as it turns out, Pauline is also involved in the conspiracy (where she used the name Emilie) – at least via her husband, the mysterious Igor, who does not appear on screen.

This is how the stories intersect, with the Thirteen in the center of the plot, which obviously leads to associations with Balzac: Rivette (in this film, as well as in others) clearly refers to *The Human Comedy*. In the volume *History of the Thirteen*, which belongs to *Scenes of Parisian Life* (comprising shorter novels: *Ferragus*, *The Duchess of Langeais*, *Girl with Golden Eyes*)[8], there are allusions to the existence of a mysterious and probably menacing secret society to which individual characters belong. However, the society does not reveal itself directly – there is no confirmation whether it actually exists, what aims and intentions it may have; Balzac himself did not pay much attention to that alleged conspiracy –it was probably simply an attractive hole in the realistic narration which was supposed to fascinate readers and motivate them to continue reading. The "menace" of the group was provided especially by the unlucky number of its members.

Importantly, neither Balzac nor Rivette "realize" the symbolic number on any surface: *Out 1*, divided into eight roughly 90-minute episodes, ends a few minutes before 1 p.m., and the number of actors in the two theater groups never reaches the magical (and unlucky) 13. Even the

[7] See Syska, *Światy wewnętrzne*, 68.

[8] Honoré de Balzac, *Historia trzynastu: Urzędnicy*. [The Thirteen] *Komedia ludzka: studia obyczajowe* [Human comedy: studies of nammers]. *Sceny z życia paryskiego* [Scenes from Parisian life]. Translated into Polish by Tadeusz Żeleński, Julian Rogoziński. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1959.

character of Renaud does not provide the explicit "symbolic agreement", although he clearly has the character of the Biblical "thirteenth apostle": he both sins and motivates the development of the story, since his disappearance becomes the motor force behind various interactions between other characters. The full 13, reduced by the absence of two characters (the already mentioned Igor and one Pierre, mentioned in stolen documents) could be completed by the young blackmailer, who is eventually murdered by a local gang (deprived of any "menacing" symbolism – it is actually dangerous), and Colin, who also manages to find members of the secret society, and even confront them; however, he is pushed aside by the society and returns to his role as a recluse who refuses to have any personal contact with the world.

Thus – just as in Balzac – numbers refuse to offer any simple symbolism, or rather the construction of the film does not offer any "symbolic" representation (or, perversely, realistic: if the Thirteen has some influence on the plot both in Balzac and in Rivette, it should "actually exist"). However, these confusing suggestions and figures do not lead us only to the simple observation that *Out 1* is a precisely planned and executed film (although this observation is not completely wrong), neither do they limit the analysis to a simple interpretation, seeing this film as a portrait of a disorganized world, and hence – in a sense – a non-realistic one.

The film offers many more possible meanings: the first one is of course the revelation in the "autothematic" context, in which *mise en abyme* is seen as a reaction to the crisis of realism and its having been discredited[9]. In his films, Rivette – similarly to Balzac – constructs a specific space, which only seems to be an organized universe. In *The Human Comedy* there are plenty of inaccuracies – in Poland they were traced (among others) by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, the famous translator of Balzac's works. Boy-Żeleński demonstrated how freely Balzac dealt with his protagonists in *The Human Comedy*: the famous Lucien de Rubempré is one example, portrayed first in *Lost Illusions*, and later featured in *A Harlot High and Low*, however – as observed by the translator – without attention to precision in terms of the chronological order of events[10]. In this context, the disorder of "the Thirteen", and the failure of any enterprise presented by Rivette (the failure of rehearsals and abandonment of the projects, the secrecy of the Thirteen, Colin's secondary alienation) are all intentional: just like in Balzac, they are supposed to represent the lack of any actual, "deep" organization behind the world – instead, this organization is shown as a superficial, symbolic ideal which does not translate into "reality" (understood this way or another). For "reality" – regardless of the rights and regularities attributed to it – never achieves the perfect transparency.

Despite belonging to the avant-garde New Wave, Rivette never gave up on the film realism that shaped him. However, like the great masters of literary realism, he did not treat it as an

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[9] See Agnieszka Waligóra, *Autotematyzm – antyrealizm? Na przykładzie jednego wiersza Tomasza Pułki* [Mise-en-abyme – anti-realism? On the example of one poem by Tomasz Pułka], "Forum Poetyki" 15-16 (2019), 80-93. Date of access 30.12.2020 http://fp.amu.edu.pl/autotematyzm-antyrealizm-na-przykladzie-jednego-wiersza-tomasza-pulki/.

[10] Tadeusz Boy Żeleński. *Od tłumacza* [Translator's note] in Balzac, Honoré de, *Blaski i nędze życia kurtyzany* [A Harlot High and Low]. Komedia ludzka. Studia obyczajowe. Sceny z życia paryskiego [Human comedy. Studies of manners. Studies from Parisian life], translated by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński. Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza "Czytelnik", 1959: 7 onwards.

art "ideology": Balzac himself presented Rivette's "peculiar realism", corresponding with the dialectically modern doubt in continuity and predictability of the world[11]. For many scholars Balzac is a precursor of Baudelaire (and the symbolists that followed him), who resigned from the idea of a simple, clear construction of the world[12], due to his almost expressionistic portrayal of space, love for the secrets of Parisian streets and rural boudoirs. *The Human Comedy* contains a lot of intriguing evidence for the "incomplete" realism of Balzac (if there was any "complete" realism), and, at the same time, clearly corresponds with numerous scenes from *Out 1*. For instance, there is one in which Colin is trying to decipher the message hidden in an abandoned letter; the incoherent text may resemble passages from *The Physiology of Marriage*, in which Balzac – probably in order to omit topics considered controversial for the censorship or the sensitive, easily ruffled audience – "encrypted" a significant portion of the book in a mysterious way. According to Boy's note, this text had never been decoded (in Polish) – in the Polish translation the code does not make any sense[13].

Hence both Balzac and Rivette – in spite of the numerous inconsistencies and failures that can be found in their works – not only produced (postulatively, although not "literally") realistic worlds, but also functioned in the spaces inside their own works, treating them as equally "real" as contemporary social or political events. Rivette enthusiastically referred to the cosmos (or rather chaos-cosmos) of Balzac, as evidenced by the reference to the *History of the Thirteen*, which Rivette – as he himself admitted – treated mostly as an excuse for combining the plotlines of his protagonists[14]. The motif of conspiracy and individual blackmail (represented by the recluse Frédérique in *Out 1*) is very common in Rivette's films; the 1988 *Gang of Four* is the most clear example. Also *The Beautiful Troublemaker* – one of his most famous films – was based on *The Unknown Masterpiece* by Balzac, a story about a painter Frenhofer and his attempts at painting a portrait of an exceptional woman; *The Beautiful Troublemaker* employs a plot technique similar to *Out 1* – viewers never find out what the portrait looks like, for Frenhofer hides it, whereas *Noli me tangere* never reveals whether the conspiracy was actually real and what it was about[15].

References to Balzac and their theoretical implications go even further, and provide an increasingly stronger autothematic or meta-artistic basis for Rivette's film, which is not turned

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[11]See Tomasz Kłys. *Narodziny filmu z ducha teatru* [The birth of film from the theater's spirit]. In *Sekretne światy Jacquesa Rivette'a* , 23.

[12]On the issues of space see especially Gisèle Séginger, *Wpisanie polityki w przestrzeń: "Stracone złudzenia" i dwuznaczność Balzakowskiej topografii* [The Policy Inscribed in the Space. Lost illusions and the Ambiguity in Balzac's Topography], translated by Piotr Śniedziewski. "Rocznik Komparatystyczny" 3 (2012); and Cesare Pavese, *Le Métier de vivre*, Paris: Gallimard 1958, 45.

[13]See Honoré de Balzac. *Fizjologia małżeństwa* [The Physiology of Marriage]. Translation into Polish and introduction by Tadeusz Żeleński-Boy. Warszawa: Czytelnik 1957, 284-285; such a stylistic and "logical" break in the construction was in fact considered to be a mistake or incoherence according to the requirements of realism.

[14]See Jonathan Rosenbaum, Lauren Sedofsky, Gilbert Adair. *Widmowe rozmowy z Rivette'em* [Interview: Jackques Rivette]. Translation into Polish by Miłosz Stelmach. In *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 103.

[15]The theater was an equally popular motif in Rivette's work; in many cases he filmed theatrical groups working on particular plays (typically very classical, either written by the ancient precursors, or the great French tragedies). See Syska *Światy wewnętrzne*, 67-68. The fact that one of the more important biographies of Balzac, published in 1965 by André Mauroisa, was entitled *Prometheus*, can be important in this context, as a possibly less important yet interesting connection between *Out 1* and Balzac's project. Polish edition: Maurois, André. *Prometeusz, czyli Życie Balzaka*. Translated by Julian Rogoziński. Warszawa: Czytelnik 1970.

towards itself as much as it is turned towards worlds and spaces synergistically created by literature, theater and cinema. After decoding the reference to *History of the Thirteen* in the "message", Colin goes to a scholar of Balzac (played by Eric Rohmer, a director who was then working on his cycle *Six Moral Tales*, also based on *The Human Comedy*). The visual layer is also full of emblems of *mise-en-abyme*, idiomatic to the cinema (or more broadly: any visual arts) – for example, there is a famous scene, constructed according to a *mise-en-abyme* rule: Pauline/Emilie, full of doubt, unfaithful to both her husband and society, is standing in between two mirrors. Her reflection, multiplied by a now-famous optical illusion, symbolizes her sense of being lost – Pauline is trying to rethink her behavior and needs, however, she can only deal with mediated reflections rather than with a clean, perfect "I"[16]. The problem of alienation and detachment from the world, in this case implied by the autothematic motif (yet not necessarily in all the other ones), leads to another important overtone of the film – its political and social significance.

Out 1 was made in 1971 – not long after the mass strikes that took place almost everywhere in the western world. Rivette often alluded to the atrophy of social life observed in the 1960s and 1970s, which was opposed in many ways. He did it in both his films and texts[17]; for instance, he claimed that the story in *Out 1* was supposed to end in 1968[18]. His 13-hour film can thus be seen as a study into life after a (failed) revolution. Collective initiatives became disorganized and dispersed, losing all subjectivity and emancipating potential – if anything, only remnants of group activity were left, like the Thirteen: a group of uncertain existence, which rather than devoting itself to action focuses on creating a sense of mystery and threat. It corresponds with the cold war trauma, prevalent in the 1970s, which according to some scholars led to a conspiratorial perception of reality – looking for hidden and potentially deadly projects[19]. Genuine social movements (microorganizations and associations) portrayed in *Out 1* include either local gangs of thugs, who do not believe in any ideas and work only for their own benefit (the man who killed Frédérique), or quasi-anarchists, bored and devoid of real energy, who devote themselves mostly to passive contestation (the youth gathering in Pauline/Emilie's bookstore).

Seen from this perspective, Frédérique and Colin – free atoms busy with their own survival, indifferent to the common interest (or – like in the case of Colin – fascinated with some idea of community, but excluded from it or detaching himself from it) – become emblematic of the whole of French society. Hence, like Balzac, Rivette wants to show a cross-section of society: however, he treats it in a specific way, as for him every character (regardless of their status or

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[16]This scene (a part of a broader motif of doubles and "non-identity" in Rivette's artistic project) also corresponds with a very interesting text, describing the role of mirrors in *Eugénie Grandet*: Naomi Schor, *Eugénie Grandet*. Translated by Agata Zawiszewska. "Pamiętnik Literacki" 4 (2009): 99-112. Date of access: 30.12.2020 https://fbc.pionier.net.pl/details/nnrd81W. Naomi Schor argues there that the mirror and the analogy between a woman's ageing and the process of excluding her from the public world is significant for the description of her transformation towards old age.

[17]See Martin, Adrian. *Wielki manipulator* [The Great Manipulator], translated by Miłosz Stelmach, *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 58

[18]See Rosenbaum, Sedofsky, Adair, *Widmowe rozmowy z Rivette'em*, 100.

[19]As Rafał Syska wrote –Rivette's whole "cosmology" was founded on the then popular notion based on a conspiracy theory, making it impossible to take a stand regarding the surrounding world (which was supposed to result in the 20th century's love for autothematic art). Syska, *Widmowe światy*, 64.

wealth) is predominantly either self-centered or focused on rebuilding lost social micro-bonds. However, none of the characters manages to do the latter: the final scene in which Thomas has a breakdown after being rejected by Lili and his coworkers (as a result of many lies between them), Colin's return to a controversial means of making money and his refusal to have any direct contact with the world, Frédérique's death at the hand of her beloved, Beatrice's failed relationship, Georges's (Lili's lover) and Igor's (Pauline's husband) absence, the pregnancy of the lonely Iris (Pauline's children's nanny), and finally Marie, who is unsuccessful at finding Renaud (she is shown in the film's final scene) – the film leaves an impression that any form of community life (regardless of the scale) has become impossible[20].

Rivette's film – although it does not have any significant emancipating potential[21] and seems to contain numerous fictional points of reference, which according to the conventional optics move it away from "real" life (as evidenced especially in improvised scenes and those with "natural" Parisians, often surprised by the actors' behavior). The famous passage with Jean-Pierre Léaud reciting the aforementioned mysterious messages is one of the most important scenes of this sort – improvised, with passers-by rather than extras.

Colin is trying to solve the mystery of the passage in two different, though fundamentally complementary ways. The first one is scrupulous philological and "cryptological" analysis: he breaks the text into verses, and then tries to uncover their meaning by rereading, as well as by consulting a university expert (Rohmer). The scholar convinces him – in line with the commonly accepted interpretation – that Balzac's Thirteen are not to be treated seriously, for they are only a narrative functor, which the author himself quickly abandons. Nonetheless, Colin is trying to find the encrypted (as he believes) message through scrupulous operations: he counts the sounds and graphemes in each verse, underlines words that are repeated (most of which refer to numbers), he marks the first letters of words, trying to find a hidden acrostic. Eventually, by means of a convoluted system, he manages to create the name Warok, used by an associate of the supposed association, who later vehemently denies the existence of any association in a conversation with Colin and Frédérique[22].

However, Colin is more than just an astute reader. In the famous Paris walk scene he also becomes an inspired reciter, who repeats, as if in a trance, unfinished sentences of a passage he believes to be coherent – which he treats as a message waiting to be decoded and interpreted, although he cannot be certain that this is in fact true. Snark and Boojum, two characters that appear in the text, lead him to Lewis Carroll – actually, it is thanks to this intertextual

[20]Balzac himself was a keen observer and commentator on the instability, inefficiency and weakness of the political system in which he lived, also expressing his conviction regarding the resulting, highly harmful atomization of the public life. Séginger, *Wpisanie polityki w przestrzeń: "Stracone złudzenia" i dwuznaczność Balzakowskiej topografii*, 240 onwards.

[21]See Laura U. Marks, *Workshipping for Ideas: Jacques Rivette's "Out 1: Noli me tangere"*. "The Cine-Files" 10 (2016). Date of access: 2.01.2021 http://www.thecine-files.com/marks2016.

[22]Colin visits him in the apartment where the other members of the Thirteen are, and Warok is starting to think that perhaps Igor or Pierre are recruiting new members; however, he does not have sufficient knowledge of his comrades' intentions, which again shows the whole conspiracy's phoney character (excluding communication among members) and the downfall of any human interactions.

reference that he manages to decipher (or guess) the hidden meaning of the whole text[23]. Colin's focus on the text and his wish to decipher the message which – he believes – the text transmits shows different means of working with language and literature, and more broadly, different ways of problematizing the meaning of art, starting from positivist genetic criticism, based on the study of the biographical and historical context (consulting the scholar), through a detailed philological analysis, which Rivette treats as an anatomical dissection of sentences, and finally, an affective and performative reading: Colin realizes the final stress only when he reads the text out loud, like a mantra, which is when he decides to pay more attention to it. This is also how the text reveals how it was designed to sound (and work) – when read silently it does not unveil its "sense", and the series of "logical" operations by Colin proves to be an insufficient analysis method.

Colin and his "cryptological" and performative approach to the text leads us to the problem of its content – or more generally, to the issue of sense in general, in terms of a work of art and existence: the question whether the central conspiracy in *Out 1* actually functioned, and whether the text studied by Colin was actually a hidden message, remains a key question to many scholars[24]. Again: Rivette often declared that he never attached much significance to the figure of the Thirteen, treating them only as a plot device which allowed him to combine the storylines of all the characters (which he later separates). The conspiracy does not exist in Balzac nor in the film – in the sense that its existence is never proved, and it never reveals itself fully: quite to the contrary, the actions of characters convinced of its existence are confusing and mutually contradictory. Warok denies the existence of the conspiracy when talking to Colin and Frédérique, although they would complete it in a material (and numerical) way in the light of the absence of Igor and Pierre; he also claims he does not know about the intentions and actions of other members. Etienne is such a naïve conspirator that he invites a stranger to his apartment, and his whole role is reduced to being a source of disinformation – he allows secret information to be stolen from him, although this information is never fully revealed. Hence the most important characters, elements and motifs remain absent – they function onscreen in the form of a functional lack.

One could of course argue that the secrecy of the association is expressed by obfuscating it from the audience (both readers of Balzac and viewers of Rivette). However, the approach of the characters (and viewers) to the very idea of meaningfulness, problematized through the presence of the structural "ignorance" in the plot and visual layers, become one of the most interesting and significant tropes regarding the reflective materialization of theory in art. Those familiar with literary studies will notice that *Out 1* shows a confrontation of two major academic approaches: those aimed at the existence of meaning, and those focused on

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[23]My understanding of sense here is a bit more general – as some broad-based meaning or functionality. On the other hand, Gilles Deleuze, to whom I henceforth frequently refer, understands it first of all as relations between different notions, also noticing that it is hidden in the ideas (or desires) of the speaker. See Gilles Deleuze, *Logika sensu*, translation into Polish by Grzegorz Wilczyński, corrected by Mikołaj Herer. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN: Warszawa 2011, 37. It should also be noted that Colin changes the French word *equipage* to the English *crew* – the "deciphering" takes place on the verge of two languages, in translation.

[24]It also corresponds with a text by Laura U. Marks, in which she summarizes research into *Out 1*. In the text, she argues that previous interpretations of the film focused on that dialectic tension between "life" and "meaning", of which that life is supposed to be deprived. See Marks.

the constructability of coherent meanings depending on the perspective and needs of the recipient of a work of art[25].

The first approach is characteristic of hermeneutics, whose fundamental assumptions are perfectly in line with Colin's first interpretative strategy: he assumes that the text is a message which requires decoding, carrying a particular and predominantly true meaning, which delineates new paths of a "real" life for him. He thus uses every piece of an analytical apparatus trying to study the possible contexts and functioning of the book to which the text refers (purely philologically, historically and performatively), not for a moment doubting the essentiality and antecedence of the meaning of his passage (or, more generally – stating authoritatively that any linguistic utterance is a form of communication). Viewed from this perspective, Colin is "textualized" – by distributing envelopes with random book pages he becomes a "messenger" (classically – of meaning, in the film – of a text whose meaning is doubtless), whose figure we can find in hermeneutics.

The hermeneutic strategy fails – Colin does not join the association, remaining an unaffiliated, free and lonely entity. However, viewers know that if the Thirteen exist, Colin definitely found their trace: he was lied to not by the text, but by people; failed communication takes place not due to misunderstanding the text, but due to external factors.

It is thus hard to doubt the purposefulness of the text: even if Colin receives it randomly, and decodes it through a series of random and illogical operations, he does uncover (or reveal) a certain message. However, if one stops to think whose intention stands behind that message, *intention lectoris* would be supported by most arguments, rather than *operis* or *auctoris* – Colin does not know that he reaches the author of the message (the Thirteen) and that he experiences some sort of initiation (into the association). During the decoding process he clearly forgets about his own role as a "messenger" – after all, he did make a living by sending random passages of text, which most likely were carefully read by his "clients", thus acquiring a secondary meaning.

The film thus accepts various possible functions of text and language without stating the primacy of either of the two: the existence of the conspiracy or its phantasmaticity – or both modalities simultaneously: the Thirteen could exist, but without a specific number of members or a specific aim, or it could function only as a purely linguistic postulate, which ultimately does not have to deprive it of its realness – it depends on the viewer. This obviously leads to the second, equally interesting "theoretical", pragmatic and post-structural strategy. Rivette highlighted (closely corresponding with poststructural theses) that what we treat as real, becomes real (as it has real consequences and translates into the actions and worldview of specific individuals). It can thus be assumed that wherever recipients (including the "external" recipient, Colin) see some meaning, this meaning exists: Colin, so keen on engage-

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[25]Michał Paweł Markowski has written extensively on the relation between essentialism and pragmatism. See Michał Paweł Markowski, *Interpretacja i literatura* [Interpretation and literature], "Teksty Drugie" No 5 (70), 2001. I ignore the obvious problem resulting from contrasting hermeneutics and pragmatics – the hermeneutic strategy is also some receptive problem, and thus it accords with pragmatics to the most general extent. However, this problem goes beyond the scope of this paper.

ment and a sense of community, assumes that the conspiracy (fictional already in Balzac) is real, or even more broadly: the conspirators, so keen on adrenaline and subjectivity, decide to turn fiction into reality, blurring the lines between a work of art or a fantasy construction and "reality": the process of "meaning-making'' and consequences of completing it are analogous in both cases.

This problem is excellently explored by Gilles Deleuze[26], so important for French theory. In *Logic of Sense*, which Rivette definitely knew[27], there is an extended passage devoted to *The Hunting of the Snark* (used by Rivette in the scene with Colin's mantra recitation), in which the philosopher argues for the role of lack as the driving force for the plot. According to Deleuze, mysteries (and more generally, misunderstandings, inaccuracies, contradictions) are the main impulse for fascinations and motivations for creating meaning: he observes that the system's initiation and dynamization is based on taking away (or concealing) a certain element[28], which is in line with Rivette's views, who sees the essence of cinema as a bond with something external and very secret, revealed without explanations by an unpredictable gesture[29] (which also corresponds with Balzac's love for secrets[30]).

Obviously in most cases the mystery is solved. Nonetheless, with some plot elements – like the symbolic Thirteen – something else happens. We do not learn whether the conspiracy really exists; moreover, the conspiracy question becomes irrelevant in the light of the "more real" forms of ill will between the characters[31], and ultimately – as argued by Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues – everyone is a member of the Thirteen, for everyone starts to display some sort of ill will. As Nerval writes in *Artèmis* – "Number Thirteen returns…and is yet number One"[32]: the association which was supposed to function as one common body disintegrates onscreen and becomes a series of lonely entities. According to Deleuze, Balzac, and Rivette, this "community" was concentrated around the unknown and the mechanisms of its dispersion[33]; the very idea of a circle reveals itself not just dialectically, in the form of an impossible community, but also in the repetitive (sic!) motifs of circularity, periodicity and constant mobility (the "mirror, not narrative" repeatability, as Liandrat-Guigues[34] put it), rather than "numericality". The presence of symbols in the outer layer of works of art (for example – titles) rather than in their deep structure, corresponds with the appreciation of the "surface", which Deleuze – following Valéry – sees as the most significant and, paradoxically, the deepest component of any entity[35]. The "superficial" game of meanings is the deepest in the sense that it most clearly

[26]A film researcher (and one studying Rivette), and additionally a source of inspiration to the director.

[27]Compare Adrian Martin, *Wielki manipulator*, translated by Miłosz Stelmach, *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 51-63. The whole article demonstrates deep relations between the philosopher's thought and Rivette's work.

[28]Martin.

[29]Jacques Rivette, *L'art. de la fugue*. "Cahiers du Cinéma" No 26, 1953: 50. In Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Geniusz melancholii* [Genius of melancholy], translated by Elżbieta Lubelska, *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 71.

[30]See Pavese, *Le Métier de vivre*, 45.

[31]See Syska, *Światy wewnętrzne*, 66. Syska writes about a significantly more "intangible" source of unclear networks of connections between protagonists and events.

[32]See Liandrat-Guigues, *Geniusz melancholii*, 79-80. This connection would also be explained by the title.

[33]See Gilles Deleuze. *Les trois cercles de Rivette*. "Cahiers du Cinéma" No 416 (1989).

[34]Linadrat-Guigues, *Geniusz melancholii*, 81.

[35]Deleuze, *Logika sensu*, 26-27.

provokes cognitive effort and leads to the creation of an event (such as a confrontation of characters), which differs by definition in terms of its lack of meaning from entities, objects and states of objects[36]: it is thus irrelevant whether the association has ever existed nor what it did, if it led to some action even in the form of "lack".

It should be added that this "meaningfulness" which we keep looking for – and which the protagonists of *Out 1* are looking for – does not have a clearly intelligible, or even textual ontology. According to Deleuze, meaning is disembodied, yet it becomes a pure event, which exists or lasts in a sentence[37]; thus regardless whether we see it as a construct, or as a "natural", binding component of the world, it has some material agency. According to Deleuze Carroll's snark is the perfect example here, an analogon of meaning: it is simultaneously some (postulative), dangerous (a combination of a snake and a shark) body, and a purely textual entity (an effect of word-formation), it is that constantly lengthened – and at the same time drawn – line by the two series[38], a bond between the space of signs and the space of the non-exclusively semiotic matter. "For the Snark was a Boojum"[39], reads the final verse of the poem: meaning – elusive beyond its event-related consequences – thus functions on two levels[40], it is a purely abstract creation and, at the same time, a supposedly somatic and causative one. Carroll himself believed in that. In the preface to the *Hunting of the Snark* he writes about "hunting for meaning", just like Snark was hunted: "Fetch it home by all means—you may serve it with greens, / And it's handy for striking a light. / You may seek it with thimbles—and seek it with care / You may hunt it with forks and hope; / You may threaten its life with a railway-share; / You may charm it with smiles and soap[41], for the hunters realized the unclear ontology of the monster, which motivated them to make a multidirectional effort.

Colin becomes the most important "materialization" of the critical theses: thanks to his fascination with the riddle of the text, and the secret of the conspiracy – thanks to his recognition (or construction) of the secret knowledge hidden in the letter, Colin not only starts to work with language, against which he clearly rebelled (he pretended to be deaf-mute), but also performatively engages in the external world. The "solution" of the mystery – decoding the text and the discovery that it does not have to contain a real rather than a fictional point of reference – brings the character another aboulia, whose various forms (observable not only in Colin, but also in other characters) exhaust the film's narration (or rather – if one argued for the incoherence of *Out 1* – exhaust the series of pictures that the film offers). Thus paradoxically thanks to Colin's exclusion from the circle, his fate makes a full one; Colin returns to the starting point, i.e. his refusal to be in touch with the world and to function in it.

[36]Deleuze, 25.

[37]Deleuze, 39.

[38]Lewis Carroll, *Wyprawa na żmirłacza. Męka w ośmiu konwulsjach* [The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in 8 Fits)], translation into Polish by Robert Stiller, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie 1982, 49.

[39]Carroll, 66. Compare with Deleuze, *Logika sensu*, 101.

[40]For what the "theory of two meanings packed into one words like to a suitcase, which was announced by Humpty Dumpty was about, see Lewis, *Wyprawa na żmirłacza*, 7.

[41]Carroll, *Wyprawa na żmirłacza. Męka w ośmiu konwulsjach*, 64.

Colin's story also proves that without the driving force of a mystery or doubts which one tries to dispel, no action is possible. If *Out 1* focused only on Colin, his autonomous decision (resigning from interpretative procedures) would lead to a "pure" final. However, Rivette opted for an open form of his film: "overruling" the composition results not from the "opening" which ends with a suggestion that Marie will continue looking for Renaud, but rather from the film's constant imitation of the materiality of a theater play or a picture taking place onscreen (like in the case of *The Beautiful Troublemaker*), which never takes a full, complete form, and thus will never produce – at least if one is in favor of formal, structural, or hermeneutic conceptualizations – the final pool of possible meanings. Any kind of "closure" for the film depends here on the viewers[42]: there is no author or omniscient narrator, who would guarantee the coherence and meaningfulness of the represented world. As Hélène Frappat explains, the author disappears behind the film, the director never has anything to say, it is the film that speaks[43] (and as Rivette commented – "the only truth is that of the filmstock and the actors[44]). Thus – in some sense – Balzac's *The Human Comedy*, and more specifically his *History of the Thirteen*, and Carroll's *Hunting of the Snark* also have a cinematic "structure" (or at least the structure of New Wave cinema – often based on understatements): they are to the same extent based on the mechanism of inspiring fascination by the functional lack or uncertainty.

Out 1, which openly reveals its inspiration in Balzac and Carroll, has to show itself not as an anti-realist, but rather post-realist film: it does not assume the falseness of a construct just because it is a construct. Quite to the contrary – it points to the productivity of the components whose "constructiveness" is indisputable[45]. As Frappar observes, conspiracy is not a solipsistic illusion (something exists because I thought of it), but rather collective thinking (something exists because we talked about it)[46]. In this sense, a work of art is founded not through the possibility of re-presentation (predominantly – a semiotic, linguistic one), but within a given piece of work that representation cannot turn into improvisation, deprived of the logic of reasons and consequences; and according to Deleuze, in a world of bodies there are no reasons nor consequences: all bodies are solely reasons for themselves and for each other[47].

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[42]See Kłys, *Narodziny filmu z ducha teatru*, 23.

[43]Hélène Frappat, *Mise en scène*, translated by Elżbieta Lubelska, *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 37. Seen from this perspective, the New Wave cinema (despite its strong individualism, which is somewhat behind the creative process, but not necessarily in a given work itself) constitutes (at least in some cases) the materialization of Roland Barthes's theory regarding the death of an author.

[44]Rosenbaum, Sedofsky, Adair, *Widmowe rozmowy z Rivette'em*, 104.

[45]For a cross-section discussion on constructivism, post-constructivism and weak realism see Ewa Bińczyk, *Technonauka w społeczeństwie ryzyka. Filozofia wobec niepożądanych następstw praktycznego sukcesu nauki* [Technoscience in a society of risk. Philosophy and the unwanted consequences of the practical success of science]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK 2012 (especially the chapter *Postkonstruktywizm w badaniach nad nauką* [Post-constructivism in studies on science]: 51 onwards). On the limits of mimesis in terms of Balzac's *Unknown Masterpiece* – which is about an excellent painting which none but the painter saw see Seweryna Wysłouch, *"Nieznane arcydzieło" Balzaca – rzecz o granicach "mimesis"*, *Piękno wieku dziewiętnastego. Studia i szkice z historii literatury i estetyki*, 277-287, [*Unknown Masterpiece* by Balzac – on the limits of "mimesis", Beauty of the 19th century. Studies and sketches on the history of literature and aesthetics], edited by Elżbieta Nowicka and Zbigniew Przychodniak, Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN 2008.

[46]Frappat, *Mise en scène*, 41.

[47]Deleuze,. *Logika sensu*, 19.

The cinema – as the materiality of the word rooted in the audiovisual environment, as well as a mechanism which enables seeing the immanent materiality of a text revealed through the analogy between the "action" of film and the "action" of literature – in this interpretation becomes not a simple materialization of a word (or a theory) as much as the reflective discovery of the agency of speech, the "cinematicity" of its "modernity" (which, according to Frappat, is about conceiving conspiracies deprived of any intention[48]), and (ultimately) moving the "property" of that word from the author-textual level to improvising actors, whom Rivette saw through the prism of their material, corporal and affective input in the film[49]. For interpretation (cognition, analysis) is – in the light of the assumptions presented here – a process always focused on the "journey" rather than the "destination": in this sense Deleuze argued that sense remains something that is constantly created by us, and that this process – analogous to a chase scene in an action film or a brilliant deduction in a crime story – is constantly becoming increasingly important thanks to the material signifiants (such as colors, rhythm, or film-related experiences)[50].

For cinema, as opposed to literature and theater – reduces the distance between a piece of work and a person – an actor – as it excludes a strong relationship with the text, in return highlighting the importance of the physical engagement in the plot. It corresponds with the category of the image (central for Deleuze as a film critic), which he took from Bergson: "Matter, in our view, is an aggregate of 'images'. And by 'image' we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*"[51]. However, film treating literature in a "film-like" way allows literature to become "detextualized": the literature that Rivette uses indeed reveals its materiality – it ceases to be only a code or a series of signs, becoming an agent of a kind, a material (even if "absent") drive for the plot which continues to take place without its text-centric entanglement[52]; "corporality" reveals itself in the works which were seen as predominantly "textual" before[53].

Ultimately it leads to the revelation of the reflexive materiality of theory: we do not argue that Rivette opted to simply portray a full theory, or that theory was created directly under the influence of New Wave cinema or other artistic creations and practices. Instead, we

[48]Deleuze, 43.

[49]Rivette said that for example in an interview he gave "Le Monde" in 1974, in Frappat, *Mise en scène*, 40. See also Kłys, *Narodziny filmu z ducha* teatru, 22. Questions of Rivette's focus on the body and its performativity are well known in criticism, and so I will just give some examples of their problematization. Kłys's paper is an excellent synthetic conceptualization of issues of interest here. See also Alain Ménil, *Miarka za miarkę. Teatr i kino u Jacques'a Rivette'a* [Measure for measure. Theater an cinema in Jacques Rivette], translated into Polish by Maria Żurowska, *Sekretne światy Jacques'a Rivette'a*, 159-175.

[50]Martin, *Wielki manipulator*, 60. Something slightly different takes place in the *Hunting*, in which we mostly deal with the signs of snark's presence and its representation, but we never see it; however, the snark (although mostly present in imagination), does trouble the crew.

[51]Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, translated by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929, VII.

[52]See Ménil, *Miarka za miarkę. Teatr i kino u Jacquesa Rivette'a*, 167. According to Ménil, the theater makes it impossible or limits that chance of the cinema, because – due to actors being "chained" to a given place, or even places" – it limits their mobility. See Ménil, 163.

[53]See *The Beautiful Troublemaker*, scrupulously analyzing the "characterics" of the protagonist's body (played by Emmanuelle Béart).

discuss interdependences and analogies. That example – the analogy of Deleuze's theory regarding the functional role of the lack of "meaning" (for Deleuze the absent snark constitutes a meaning in itself[54]) and structural plot holes, which for, say, phenomenology would most likely become places of "specification", and yet impossible to specify due to the lack of fundamental source knowledge – shows that the cinema does not simply become a materialized play of idiomatic cinematic techniques; they have an analogous construction and technical characteristics. After all, they are based on a certain self-centered lack, rather than a purposeful one (first and foremost – on the initial lack of "meaning", compensated by materiality and eventfulness), becoming a blueprint for a cognitive sense-creative way – at least in the case of *Out 1* – of "theorizing" not the film, but to the contrary – the cinematic, fictional characteristics of the theory. Viewed from this perspective, open-structure works continue to undulate[55], they offer endless cognitive effort, analogous to the "incomplete" post-structural interpretation.

For Deleuze, the cinema is a new field encompassing pictures and signs which have to be produced by the philosophical theory within conceptual practice[56]. If we understand a work of art as a game of certain events with some meaning created on their surface, and theory (in line with its etymology) as a reflection which strives towards explanation, the cinematicity of theory "as a chase" becomes evident. Consequently, post-structural theory – it should be accepted without getting into other conditionings or limitations[57] – becomes equally exciting as watching a New Wave film in a given application: it offers an adventure of affective experience or detective-like investigation of subsequent elements of its construction, whose character leaves the audience with unanswerable, yet still inspiring questions.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

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[54]Deleuze, *Logika sensu*, 40.

[55]Deleuze, *Les trois cercles de Rivette,* 47.

[56]Gilles Deleuze, *Kino* [Cinema]*,* translated into Polish by Janusz Margański, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/ Obraz/Terytoria, 2008: 492.

[57]For example for mise-en-abyme Deleuze's theory results in an entanglement in discourse levels, inevitably leading to various aporias, and repositioning of any "borders" and "playing at their boundaries". See Deleuze, *Logika sensu*, 38-39, 42-43. To some extent, it is problematized by the author, who writes about the paradox of sterile doubling or dry repetition. Deleuze, 56.

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KEYWORDS

Jacques Rivette

theory of literature

Abstract:

The article analyzes post-structural theoretical perspectives in analogies to the construction of films. According to Gilles Deleuze, supported by an interpretation of the works by Lewis Carroll, a functional lack is a key element of every system, as it activates and dynamizes that system, motivating the recipients to undertake cognitive activity. Hence fiction and related analyses and interpretations work according to the same rule – they are "a hunt for meaning". This hypothesis is supplemented by an observation made on the basis of a New Wave film by Jacques Rivtte, *Out 1*, regarding the reflexive "detexcentralization" and "materialization" of theory in the cinema.

Honoré de Balzac

Lewis Carroll

Gilles Deleuze

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