

Review of the dissertation

"The Fragmentary Requirement and the Possibility of Literary Transgression"

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Ioanna Neykova's dissertation, "The Fragmentary Requirement and the Possibility of Literary Transgression," offers a very different consideration of the fragment, which does not fit into its thinking as a certain historically formed literary form or as a genre, as it is usually commented. Joanna Neykova is inclined to see in the fragment a literary-theoretical category claiming universality, which is inherent to literature as a whole. It is no coincidence that she speaks not of a "fragment" but of a "fragmentary," but rather of a "fragmentary requirement," quoting Maurice Blanchot. What is the "fragmentary requirement," according to the PhD student? As far as my reading allows me to clarify, Ioanna Neykova's text mainly addresses two meanings of the term. They are related. One is the inherent fragmentarity of a literary work, even when the intention of wholeness is present, and the other is transgression—the pushing of the work beyond its literary-historical and philosophical boundaries. How are the two meanings related? Being fragmentary, the literary work is not a closed identity; it is always also a difference in relation to what it is.

The dissertation insists that it is far removed from the task of doing a history or genealogy of the fragment, but we will encounter quite a few moments where it reflects on the origins of the fragmentary in modern Western culture. Chapter one, entitled "The Romantic Fragment and the Origins of Modern Fragmentation," discusses the historical-philosophical basis of the modern

fragment—the thinking of Friedrich Schlegel and early German Romanticism. This part of the text shows very clearly one of the features of the dissertation: the doctoral student's very good knowledge of the literature on the studied problem. Joanna Neykova has a particular preference for modern and provocative interpretations of early German Romanticism.

Central to the work is the insistence that the fragment in early Romanticism does not deny totality but affirms it in a new way and strives for a different totality that is not totalizing and totalitarian. The fragment demands other fragments. So a voluminous totality that defines literary modernity, such as the novel, for example, can consist of fragments. This thesis, which is found in the outstanding book “The Literary Absolute” by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, is developed convincingly in the analysis of Friedrich Schlegel's ideas.

The second chapter discusses Walter Benjamin's understanding of allegory. The choice is not accidental, since Benjamin is among the theorists and critics of the twentieth century with a very acute sense of the fragmentary. On the other hand, however, this thinker has received so much attention that it seems very difficult to say anything new about him anymore. This, however, is not the case. Joanna Neykova highlights the interesting relationship between allegory and ruin in Benjamin's texts. With the separation between the plan of content and the plan of articulation, which has been repeatedly emphasised since Benjamin, allegory is emblematic of the fragmentary. The fragmentary in his work is akin to ruin. Just as with the ruin, only a part of what it was before it became a ruin remains, so in allegory, the plan of articulation is the visible side of something that is only suggested but not shown—the meaning.

The most voluminous part of Joanna Neikova's dissertation is chapter three, devoted to Maurice Blanchot's views on literary work and his understanding of the literary form “récit.” I think that Joanna Neykova has managed (of course, together with the thesis supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Darin

Tenev, who is an outstanding connoisseur of Blanchot) to find her way to the French thinker. In my view, the comparisons that Ioanna Neikova makes with Heidegger on the question of the beginning of a literary work are very productive. The influence that Blanchot feels from Heidegger is known, but the PhD student also perceives and highlights the criticism of the author of "Being and Time."

In chapter four, the comparison between Maurice Blanchot and Paul Auster is central. Ioanna Neikova looks at Oster's novel "Book of Illusions" to explore the closeness between the two writers on the theme of inspiration as a manifestation of fragmentation. Inspiration is close to Blanchot's notion of 'experience' (which the thesis also discusses at length). It interrupts the usual rhythm of living to bring together event and language; it is the moment of their meeting.

I confidently recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to award to Ioanna Neykova the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty 2.1. Phylology – Literary Theory.

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