

OPINION

on

the dissertation theses for awarding the educational and scientific degree of PhD  
in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian  
literature after the Second World War)

on the subject

TIME AND SPACE IN THE BULGARIAN FILM AND NOVEL AFTER THE SECOND  
WORLD WAR. OPPOSITION OF SACRAL AND PROFANE TIME AND SPACE

written by

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given by the jury member

Prof. Svetla Hristova, PhD, NBU, professional direction 8.4. Film and Television Art

The dissertation thesis “Time and Space in the Bulgarian Novel and Film after the Second World War. Opposition of Sacred and Profane Time and Space” by the doctoral student Dimitar Radev has been discussed and referred for defense by the Department of Bulgarian Literature of the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski“. The work has a volume of 273 pages and its contents includes introduction, three parts, conclusion and bibliography.

Dimitar Radev has a rich biography of an active and searching person, pursuing the understanding of theoretical issues important for the modern artist and their implementation in artistic practice, judging by his accumulated specialized knowledge in the spheres of cinema and literature (thanks to his education in the disciplines of cinema and television directing, screenwriting and dramaturgy) as well as his occupation as a contemporary critic and analyst of literary and film works. The emphasis on the preliminary educational and practical training of Dimitar Radev in the field of script writing and film realization, as starting points to the stated theoretical prerequisites in the presented dissertation work, comes to show that it is part of the path to this understanding.

**The title of the thesis** points to a claiming for a panoramic perspective towards two worlds within the segment of a certain time – the world of verbal creativeness and the world of film art, but actually concretizing the topic of the dissertation, choosing three works of art from each sphere, as a paradigm of the phenomena, inducing their appearance and occurrence, serving as the object of the doctoral theoretical analysis and interpretation. These are: the film "The Iconostasis" (1969) by the directors and screenwriters Hristo Hristov and Todor Dinov, based on two of the novels of Prespa tetralogy by Dimitar Talev "The Iron Candlestick" (1952), "The Bells of Prespa" (1954); the novel "Time of Parting" (1964) by Anton Donchev and the film "Time of Parting" (1988) by the creative team Lyudmil Staykov – director and screenwriter, Radoslav Spasov – cameraman and screenwriter, Georgi Danailov, Mikhail Kirkov – screenwriters, and finally the novel "Exaltation" by Milen Ruskov (2011) together with the film "Exaltation" (2017) by director Victor Bozhinov and screenwriter Neli Dimitrova, where the writer Milen Ruskov himself has played an active role in the script.

It is obvious that these titles are part of the tradition of recreating the historical heritage in works of art both in Bulgarian literature and in film. We can ask ourselves about the motivation of this selection among the multitude of other works, no less exceptional in their high creativity, that

appeared concurrently, overexposed or less interpreted in literary and film studies. Certainly, however, the author's rationale for choosing precisely these three couple of works from the overall literary production and screen adaptations is related to the possibility that the works themselves give the doctoral student to enter deeper in his interpretation of the problem of historicity, reality and the place of the Self, to achieve an exit from the frames of pathetic patriotism and to move into another dimension of eternal patterns of human behavior and understanding of the world. Moreover, it is not in vain, that I indicate the time of the appearance of the works – the first pair of works in the period of the 50s and 60s, the second – in the 70s and 80s and the third – in the 20s of the present century. The chronological order of the selected masterpieces immediately speaks about the distinguishing trends in these decades of the social and aesthetic life of literature and film art, as well as about the tendency for precision and theorization on the modern and postmodern in current literary and film theory and criticism. In this sense, on the one hand, the dissertation work by Dimitar Radev fits into the series of the already acknowledged theoretical studies concerning problems of literature from the period of Bulgarian socialism, while on the other – within the still weakly manifested interest of the film theory in this era, thus corresponding to the requirement for innovative contributions of the thesis.

**The theme of the dissertation** concerns generally the relations between the written word and screen image and the related with them their relativity and fluctuations in transmission, translation, adaptation, interpretation, their proximity and distance, their unity and differences when comparing their language and the stylistic and technical means of expression. Such is the problematic even at the dawn of cinema theory – its relationship with literature as a basis, because despite the analogies with the primary literary source, cinema is so close to literature as it is also different, being an independent semiotic system with its own specific language.

**The author's methodology** is interdisciplinary, or it can even be more precisely defined as multi-functional and multi-layered, using a large set of statements and critical theories from the instrumental arsenal of narratology as a science. A central focus to the theme of the dissertation is the interaction between story and narrative (verbal and cinematographic), which is the benchmark of the developing research approaches in the analysis of the mode of narration/visual display. On the whole, the doctoral student seeks to make use of this complex arsenal of poststructuralist literary studies, applying it to the study of film screening of literary works. Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope" remains as a red thread in his analysis, terminologically replacing a large range of conceptual categories and typological representations and their invariants, e.g. own-foreign, down-up, the road, the meeting, etc., applied most adequately in the separate parts of the dissertation according to the specifics of the context of the discussed works. This makes the logical deepening of the methodological perspective to move from the broad framework of general philosophical and aesthetic perceptions of modernity to the narrowing and differentiating of the utilized research approaches, particularly in the three parts; thus in the first part of the dissertation a theological-historical interpretational reading is fulfilled, in the second part – a psychoanalytical one, while in the third part – an intertextual reading is applied.

In building his broad methodological platform, the doctoral student relies on authors with contributions in various fields of the humanitarian studies from the time of the beginning of structuralism (V. Propp, Eichenbaum, etc.) through its imposition in the 60s and 90s (Arthur Danto, Greimas, Roland Barthes, Gerard Genet, Mikhail Bakhtin, Tsvetan Todorov, Bordwell, Chatman), as well as the achievements of contemporary postmodern intellectual research regarding the semantic and discursive functions of key concepts in Bulgarian literary and film theories.

The **structure** of the dissertation text follows the three-part division of the script plot in American practice, likewise established in the world film community, where the intrigue and its fabulous development gradually lead to a culminating resolution and symbolic message. Thus, we must consider in this way – temporally and spatially – the consecutive development of the analysis and interpretation by the doctoral student of the ideas, images and forms of the narrative in the selected films in relation to the chronotope in the separate parts of the dissertation – as the author's own "repetition" of the theoretical model, with which he approaches the structure of the narrative in the different categories of verbal realization of the epic novel, of the bildungsroman, of the burlesque, of the picaresque and their specific screen implementation.

A similar stadial development is also followed in the elaboration of the separate problems in the different parts of the dissertation work, relating to the sign formulas of the verbal and screen narrative, with their diversities and analogies, with all their conditionality such as: the question of narrative and discourse (the presentation of the linear, the cyclical, discontinuous, backward-moving time and space of happening before and after); the question of speech (of the narrator, of the characters and the ensemble of voices in a polyphonic psychological revelation and philosophical summary); the question of the protagonist (his motivations and driving actions in the causal order, along with his transformations from a representative of the collective and generic-typological to an assertion of individuality and the Self); questions about the structure/construct of the narrative (grammatical and punctuation formulas in literary texts and their correspondences in the technical appliances of camera, lighting, sound)...

The specific attitude to the commented verbal and visual material, from the point of view of the selection, creation, and of the emphasis on sign elements inherent in syntagmatics and paradigmatics of the relevant text and its contextualization on the screen, makes **the style** of the doctoral student so much theoretical with its research observations and analyzes, as also being interpretive, with a literary flair for creating words. This also explains the inclusion of a large number of quotations of critical texts by different authors, as well as the insertion of parts of literary texts in a kind of "game" of using and rewriting the text.

**The contributions of the research** can be synthesized, on the one hand, as a proposal by the doctoral student of particularly new critical perspectives to the verbal and screen works considered in the dissertation, and on the other – as a construction of a general theoretical basis/model, with an attempt at postmodern interdisciplinary and intertextual analysis of the interrelationships between literary and film narrative. It is worth asking, though, how well this general theoretical model works if applied to other set of genre film categories. Evidently however, the model, using the tools of narratology, can be transformed, improved, it can also introduce and accumulate more and more different theoretical approaches and schemes in the spirit of diversity and versatility of contemporary thinking.

### **Conclusion**

The set of materials presented by the doctoral student contains the complete documentation necessary for the procedure. The check with the Anti-Plagiarism system shows that the text by Dimitar Radev is original, the Abstract adequately reflects the content of the dissertation.

Bearing in mind the contributions of the thesis to literary theory and especially to Bulgarian film criticism and theory, I vote positively for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Dimitar Radev.

Date: 25 април 2024 г.

Jury member:  
Prof. Svetla Hristova, PhD