

OPINION

by Associate Professor Dr. Darin Voinov Tenev, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

regarding the Dissertation of

Enyo Konstantinov Stoyanov

"Invention and Literature in Contemporary Theory"

2.1. Philology (Theory of Literature)

Enyo Stoyanov's dissertation consists of eight chapters, an introduction, a conclusion and a bibliography with 286 standard pages in total. The bibliography includes 121 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, English, French, German and Spanish.

At the very beginning, I must say that in terms of its conceptual power, thoroughness and originality, this work exceeds the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor". By closely following the stated research topic formulated in the title, the work is not only systematizing the most important and influential theoretical conceptions related to literary invention, but is consistently and densely building its own conception, and this is one of the most the great contributions of the work.

The theme, as expressed in the title, runs the risk of being misread, displaced, so as to be reduced to the question of contemporary theories of invention in literature. However, the dissertation has not led astray by this reductionist proposition. In the careful readings and reconstructions that it deploys while presenting and developing its own theses, the study traces the parallel path of its two main concepts, invention and literature, showing how and when their trajectories have been intertwined and associated, and then, demonstrates how the very understanding of invention today is dependent on and relies on something literary even when it is not directly concerned with literature. The conscientious approach to the problem posed in the title leads to a complex strategy both regarding the structuring of the study and in relation to the imposition of methodological limitations. The other structurally defining point is related to the second part of the title: "in contemporary theory." Contemporary theory is understood not as reducible to literary theory in the narrow sense, but in terms of the expanded boundaries of what

is sometimes called "Theory" with a capital T, including in a productive way philosophy, critical theory, and a particular self-reflection of the very field of theory in the humanities.

Before moving on to a critical presentation of the main theses of the dissertation, I would like to say a word about the methodological limitations chosen by the paper and about the strategy I mentioned. Seven of the dissertation's eight chapters are devoted to twentieth-century thinkers and researchers who have offered strong and influential theses on invention and the new. With the exception of one (chapter six), all deal with names from the second half of the twentieth century, that is, the time of what is defined as "modern theory." It is noticeable that no chronological principle is followed. The dissertation begins with Derrida, whose text, extensively and carefully analyzed, is from the eighties and in terms of time is much later than Adorno's texts examined, as well as ten years later than Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, which are the subject of the third chapter. The fourth chapter turns to Iser's literary anthropology, developed in the second half of the eighties and early nineties, at least a dozen years after Ricoeur's book on metaphor, which is discussed in chapter six. Why is the chronology not followed?

Chronology is a good excuse when it is difficult to build a conceptual trajectory when considering a given issue. In Enyo Stoyanov's dissertation, such an apology was not necessary. He starts from Derrida because it is through Derrida that he highlights most effectively the main directions that will drive his own questioning. The two most important directions I would mention can be formulated as questions: (1) How can the two meanings of invention as discovery of something already existing and as producing something new, be thought of simultaneously? (2) Can such a solution to the combination of the two be found that does not need a transcendent support, a solution that is fundamentally immanent? To these directions one can add others, such as the question of whether the invention should refer only to form or should be understood as a semantic operation. They are all outlined clearly in the chapter on Derrida.

However, this implies a maximum focus on the discussed problem, and in this sense the chapter on Derrida requires not a study of the French thinker, but on the contrary, a methodological refrain from examining the numerous texts of the thinker himself and the even more numerous commentaries on them. The chosen strategy is to select such a text that would allow a focused derivation of the main threads not in the light of Derrida's work but in the light of the problem of invention and literature. Enyo Stoyanov, who has published texts on Derrida and knows him well, has focused on "Psyché: Invention of the Other" and has kept at minimum the

references to other texts, either by Derrida or by thinkers mentioned in the chapter, such as de Man or Searle. For example, when he examines the quote from Cicero in “Psyché...” and analyzes the allegorical aspect of Derrida's performative gesture in his reading of the relationship between father and son, in which the son has already anticipated the father's desire and responded to it before it appeared, Enyo Stoyanov brackets the huge question of the child and the relationship with the father in the writings of the French thinker (at least from the *Dissemination* and *Glas* through *The Postcard* to the *Circonfession* and beyond) in order to foreground the invention in the way it has been discussed deconstructively in the context of classical rhetoric.

The same double strategic move, in which, on the one hand, a primary focal text is selected, and on the other hand, the commentary escapes dispersion by operating a methodological *epoche* regarding the leading astray threads of the theories and concepts under consideration, can be seen in the other chapters, but especially clearly in the last one devoted to Gilbert Simondon and Gilles Deleuze, where – like the chapter on Derrida – the danger of dissipation and digression is greatest. Such a strategy requires not only impressive self-discipline, but also a deep knowledge of the authors commented, because otherwise, even when an appropriate text is chosen as a focal point, interpretative distortions and misreadings would easily result. It is precisely the precision, rigor and correctness of the interpretations that Enyo Stoyanov offers to each of the authors under consideration that shows how much he was concerned and how carefully he studied the thinkers and the secondary literature on them before unfolding the threads of his own research.

It is noteworthy that two of the chapters seem to correspond neither to the rejection of the chronological principle nor to the focus on contemporary theory. These are the first and sixth chapters, dedicated respectively to the development of the concept of invention from Antiquity to Modernity and to Henri Bergson. In both cases, however, their inclusion was in line with the main strategy. The first chapter offers a genealogy of the very emergence of the problem of invention as a topic in the twentieth century, showing also how in its very genesis invention became intertwined with literary questions of mimesis, fiction, and metaphor. In this sense, this chapter provides the necessary framework so that the second chapter on Derrida can highlight the key threads of the problematic. The chapter on Bergson, on the other hand, is not only a necessary introduction to Deleuze (and it should be mentioned here that the reading of Bergson proposed in the dissertation is admittedly Deleuzian, with important references to Deleuze's work

on Bergson), but also a necessary counterpoint to the authors discussed so far (Derrida, Adorno, Bürger, Iser, Dolezel, Ricoeur). In this sense, it is necessary not in view of the chronology, but of the conceptual logic of the work.

Summing up the chosen and consistently pursued complex strategy of the dissertation, I would say that rarely as scholars and researchers do we come across works such as those proposed by Enyo Stoyanov – a work that combines rigor and freedom in an impressive way. The rigor, on the one hand, of careful thinking, of the reasoned construction of a strong literary and philosophical argument, and, on the other hand, the rigor of the extremely good knowledge of the sources he discusses. But this rigor not only does not hinder, but on the contrary, helps to unfold the freedom of Stoyanov's theoretical thought. Because in this work on invention, inventions from the side of the dissertation text itself constantly appear and constantly shed new light on well-known authors, find thinkers unknown to the general public, draw always surprising and always surprisingly convincing interpretations, and this while building a theoretical a concept that boldly goes beyond everything that literary theory has offered. Therefore, I will now turn to the theses developed in the work and to Enyo Stoyanov's own concept of the invention.

The chapter on Derrida demonstrates how, even if one ties invention to the new, invention would retain the connection – central to Antiquity's use of the concept – to the already given, primarily in view of the fact that, in order to be recognized as new at all, it needs conditions which to allow this, there is a need for rules, for conventions, for an already given and recognizable context, which, however, presupposes that it abandons the absolutely new. "New" in this sense cannot be a defining criterion; it is a metaphysically predetermined concept. Hence Derrida's insistence that invention is the invention of the other (in the dual sense of subjective and objective genitive), and the other is not the new. The other presupposes a "repeated irreducible singularity" (p. 59). Enyo Stoyanov, however, points out that with this gesture, Derrida faces the risk of bringing back invention to a transcendence, similar to the one posited by the Baroque with the idea of amazement by the miracle. Therefore, rather than proceeding to a metaphysics of otherness (the expression is mine), he prefers to rethink the very notion of the new in another way.

This leads to the analysis of T. W. Adorno and P. Bürger. (Let me mention, parenthetically, that part of the dissertation's sophisticated strategy is to offer paired analyses, in which the thinkers discussed illuminate each other and expose each other's limitations. Such

conceptual pairs are Adorno and Bürger, Iser and Luhmann, Simondon and Deleuze.) The reading of Adorno demonstrates how the new can paradoxically go beyond the threats of reification and commodification through a return to mimesis, but a mimesis of the new in which the new remains non-identical, revealing in an appearance of appearance the constant non-coincidence of truth and appearance (and hence of every status quo and current situation of art appropriation). This implies not giving up the idea of autonomy, but at the same time requires a combination of what is autonomous and what is heteronomous. Bürger's critique of Adorno's conception shows that the loss of autonomy he finds in the avant-garde "carries with it a complete discrediting of the new." (P. 76) If one stays with Adorno, however, one must explain how autonomy, to be "capable of newness," must remain incomplete, intertwined with heteronomy.

The next two chapters, on Wolfgang Iser and on Lubomir Dolezel, trace two possible answers to this problem. In his reading of Iser, Enyo Stoyanov shows how the literary-anthropological project of the German literary critic can be interpreted as a response to the problem of the interweaving of autonomy and heteronomy. Criticizing the fact that Iser has not thematized the distinction between real (from the fictitious-imaginary-real triad) and reality (as including other systems fulfilling pragmatic purposes), he traces how the "destitution" of the real (p. 118) is a destitution produced by the very acts of fictionalization. These acts allow fiction to be seen as crossing or transgressing boundaries (as Iser insists) only insofar (and here is Stoyanov's criticism of Iser) as fiction itself draws these boundaries as a system delimiting itself from its environment. It is precisely in this that literature will invariably combine autonomy and heteronomy. However, this calls into question the anthropological function of fiction, insofar as it is revealed not to be universal, but to be created by fictionalizing operations. Interpreting Iser's late unfinished work on emergence, the dissertation suggests that, perhaps, if not reducible to the closed circle of internal boundaries that literature draws and crosses, invention must then be sought in those fields neglected by Iser's project, namely the fields of semantics and pragmatics.

The semantic perspective is examined through Dolezel's theory of fictional worlds, which is based on, but also distances itself from, the possible world semantics. This theory shows how the new can be thought through the construction of a fictional world. This will mean that through literary illocutionary acts there will emerge a referent of fictional texts that can neither be reduced to the actual world nor be equated with the complete and uncontradictory possible worlds of the

philosophy of Kripke and other theorists in this line of logic. The dissertation shows, however, that despite its rebellion against Platonic-type models, Dolezel's theory makes an analogous move when it introduces the incompleteness of the fictional world as defining that world. It turns out that Dolezel's semantic solution still requires a transcendental support, which, instead of bringing it closer, distances it from the real. The new of which Dolezel speaks, just like that of Iser, is not to be found in reality.

An alternative version of Dolezel's interpretation of the semantic invention, a version that does not rest on fiction, but on rhetoric, the dissertation finds in Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor*. There, semantic invention occurs in the split – or double – reference of metaphorical referral. Enyo Stoyanov shows, however, that Ricoeur maintains this thesis about the heteroreferentiality of literary metaphor at the cost of a too rigid distinction between philosophy and literature, in which self-referentiality is reserved only for philosophical discourse, and thus fails to see the self-referential movement of invention, which does not override but rather accompanies heteroreferentiality.

The last two chapters through Bergson, Simondon and Deleuze provide a counterpoint to the theories discussed up to this point. Which does not mean that there are no serious criticisms of the discussed authors. Yet it is through the thinkers examined here that an alternative is found, firstly, to readings of invention that demand transcendence (from the Baroque to Derrida to Dolezel), while, secondly, allowing for the co-operation of autonomy and heteronomy as grounded in the interweaving of auto-referentiality and hetero-referentiality. Bergson introduces the idea, developed by both Simondon and Deleuze, of the immanence of becoming. The idea is important in at least twofold manner for the dissertation. The first is that if the past as true time includes duration in the sense of ceaseless change, then the new is constantly appearing in the real itself; ontologically; that is, both being and everything in it (Bergson's ontology does not presuppose an onto-ontological distinction of the Heideggerian type) is a constant invention. The second point refers to the fact that the past thus understood as duration (ceasing change and emergence of the new) does not follow, but is simultaneous, contemporary with the present, which is why, even in its constant unfolding, every step of becoming is preserved in that which comes – in terms of the present – after it. In the words of the thesis, "duration itself becomes the preservation of change every time" (p. 186) This aspect, so inspiring to Simondon, gives entirely different access to the question of the relation of invention to the given, without requiring

recourse to a transcendental explanatory mechanism. At the same time, however, as Enyo Stoyanov rightly points out, Bergson's concept implies continuity, which, precisely because of its radicality, cannot account for the problem of death as an interruption that duration cannot integrate.

The dissertation solves this problem by turning to Simondon and Deleuze, and in such a way as to bring us back to the question of literature and to all the problems considered up to this point – the combination of autonomy and heteronomy, the self-referentiality of invention, the dimension of meaning, etc. I will single out three moments from this decision. First of all, Enyo Stoyanov takes up Deleuze's conception of the future as developed from *Difference and Repetition* to *Cinema 2. Time Image*. According to this conception, based on a particular interpretation of Nietzsche, the future constantly differentiates present and past, actual and virtual, thus revealing itself as a pure form of time in which repetition is the repetition of difference. Hence the new. However, unlike in Bergson such a conception of time is not opposed to death, but is its generalization, which saturates all moments with it. Second, the future understood in this way, producing differences in the virtual and the actual, requires the abandonment of the idea of the unilinearity of time. It is, on the contrary, the power of the false, breaking away from the dictates of the unified truth and unlocking impossible times. It is precisely at this point, however, that the dissertation shows how Deleuze's entire argumentation revolves around literature and concepts such as fiction, mimesis, simulacrum. Not only does invention help us think literature, but literature sheds light on what invention is. The third point is related to the auto-referential movement of invention (both in Simondon and in Deleuze), which in the formed temporal node (repetition is a repetition of the new, there is more than one past, etc.) changes the starting conditions. In the dissertation, this allows for a development of systems theory so as to reveal how autopoietic systems in invention retroactively change the conditions of the very invention by which they are constituted. This is, therefore, the principal solution to the question how to deal away with the transcendental explanatory mechanism: in the case of self-reflexive reference, the starting conditions are retroactively redefined, immanently.

If I try, beyond the criticism that Enyo Stoyanov offers to the various discussed authors, to briefly summarize the main concept of the dissertation, gradually and inexorably developed through the readings of the particular theories, I would formulate it in the following manner: the two meanings of invention (finding something already existing and producing the new) are linked

in two series that resonate by allowing the new to form retroactively its own conditions. Therefore, invention is revealed as “the finding of something that was not predetermined, as the discovery of something that would have already been there” (p. 209). Such a retroactive formation of conditions starts from the self-reference of a mimesis in itself, which does not yet imply a likeness to anything existing, but is a difference. This difference is meaning: a meaning flashing between the two series. When he comes to this key point in the last chapter, the one on Deleuze and Simondon, Enyo Stoyanov shows how from the first chapter he himself will have already demonstrated how this mechanism works with his analyzes of metaphor, the concept of wit, mimesis and fiction. This allows the theoretical position to be even more radically developed – the dissertation will have shown not only what invention is in literature, how invention functions in one work, but also how it operates between different works in the development of literature, and also how the very mechanism of invention, insofar as it is based on mimesis-in-itself as a difference that produces identity and resemblance only at the second step, the very mechanism of invention will have been literary. Through invention, literature interacts directly with reality, creating its own conditions, not just creating a fictional world detached from reality, but actually finding new dimensions of reality. Thus, Enyo Stoyanov's dissertation impressively manages to fulfill its promise – to say something new about the new.

The epistemological stake of the dissertation goes beyond the field of literary studies. The developed concept of invention can be used in other disciplines and in areas that are at first glance remote from literature. But along with this, the study fulfills an additional function – to show why and how both literature and the study of literature are important today, in a world that increasingly marginalizes them.

With its richness, the dissertation provokes thought and raises many questions. I will ask two sets of questions here. The first concerns the work with specific artistic texts. Can you give an example of a literary work of invention? What does it mean to exemplify the new? Can an analysis be done with the philosophical-literary apparatus developed by the dissertation and what would it look like? The second group of questions concerns the contemporary over-exposure and exploitation of “invention” and “innovation”. If invention operates in the way described in the study, then there would be invention even when it comes to what both Adorno and Peter Bürger criticize as market appropriation, whereby the “new” is a marker of commoditization and what is

presented as new is but a constant renewal of the same. In this sense, can the apparatus of the dissertation be harnessed for a critical theory of modern marketing mechanisms? And, more importantly, are there changes, inventions that are different in nature from market inventions and the market “new”? Inventions to transform the mode of transformation characteristic of contemporary society?

Enyo Stoyanov's dissertation “Invention and Literature in Contemporary Theory” is an important contribution not only to Bulgarian literary studies, but to literary theory globally, and it is great that earlier versions of some of the chapters have already been published in foreign languages . I hope it will be published as a book in Bulgarian and English.

The dissertation satisfies and exceeds all substantial criteria for this degree. The abstract comprehensively presents the main points of the dissertation work and correctly indicates the important contributions. Based on everything that has been said, I am convinced that Enyo Stoyanov should be awarded the educational and scientific degree “doctor”.

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