

STATEMENT REPORT

of the PhD Thesis entitled: "The nomadic subject in Matvey Valev's works: nature and machine"

by PhD candidate Martin Plamenov Kolev,

under the procedure for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

from Assoc. Prof. Noemi Stoichkova

My statement will combine a personal account of our professional meetings with Martin Kolev and my observations on the work presented by him.

Our first meeting was at the PhD Candidate entrance exam at the Department of Bulgarian Literature. Even then it left an impression on me that his literary-historical readiness was on a par with the best Bachelor graduates of the Bulgarian Philology students. He reaffirmed this impression at his PhD candidate minimum cumulative exam, and this dissertation is now public proof of this young colleague's impressive competences, both on the processes, and on the specific authorial presences in the period from the Liberation to the Second World War. And one more thing – I found his wish telling to, after becoming acquainted with the dominant biographical optics of the already existing research on Matvey Valev, change the formulation of the topic, in order to move away from traditional interpretations, by applying an up-to-date postmodern Deleuze-Guattarian paradigm, which is known in Bulgaria but not often employed (yet) in the field of philological and social sciences. In that sense, Kolev shows an experimental approach, which to some extent, brings him back to his bachelor's university background in psychology. His interests and explorations are synchronized with the psychoanalytic discourse in the studies of the two French philosophers. In addition to this methodological complexity, I must add that the PhD candidate successfully uses the method of case study, which gives him the opportunity to include in the conceptual-theoretical scope thinkers such as H. Bergson, C. G. Jung, J. Lacan, P. Ricoeur, G. Simmel, M. de Certeau, M. Foucault, A. Schütz, H. Bertens, Z. Bauman, J. Kristeva, Iain Chambers, Michael Agar, Pierre Clastres, some of whom left their intellectual imprint on the rhizomatic thought structure for nomadism constructed by Deleuze and Guattari, also called by them an "abstract machine of change". The colleague also uses later works – for example, those of Rosi Braidotti, which further develop the positions of Deleuze and Guattari. The present overview

is important as it allows me to emphasize that M. Kolev has serious general theoretical humanitarian sensibilities and an understanding of their gradual development.

In addition to our academic meetings during the PhD program, I invited M. Kolev to be a member of the scientific team in the project "Texts from the Marginalia: Memory and Uses". Our collaboration has shown me that he is hardworking, both diligent and proactive. The last year and a half has also shown what Martin noted at the start of his dissertation summary – his interest in the literary periphery. This interest has more specific dimensions, when referring to M. Valev and his works, as this writer, especially in the last ten years, has had such a dedicated researcher as Andrey Tashev. Martin himself, when reviewing Tashev's monograph, titled his review: "The increasingly well-known Matvey Valev". Despite that, the PhD candidate sets about his research object with a pronouncedly innovative interpretation – through the so-called nomadology – not only of Valev's works, but of a whole range of texts in Bulgarian literature of the twentieth century, and perhaps potentially from the new millennium as well. Thus, Kolev, by collegially leveraging the work before him, shows that the author is still quite unknown. In this sense, the Tashev-Kolev duo, set on a type of rehabilitation of Valev and his texts, shows the many possibilities to work with the literary marginalia, to show more and newer dimensions of "over here" in the periphery, and "beyond" to approaching one or several central, canonical areas.

After overviewing my personal impressions of the PhD candidate and his dissertational work, I need to note at least four additional aspects solely on the *text-Kolev*. It could not be thought of as politically correct, because it persistently shows that the cosmopolitanism that was talked about in the Interwar period and is still relevant today, is another manifestation of wandering, far from nomadism. This nomadism is a different manifestation of the archetypal Wanderer (Ahasuerus), on the one hand, and on the other – it is seen as a counterpoint to cultural progress and as an alternative to the hierarchical, state-authoritarian, tree-like model (according to Deleuze-Guattari) that increasingly loudly and (un)vocally is being imposed now.

In direct connection with the beforementioned, I shall point out the clear and convincingly functional typology of different modes of wandering, presented in Chapter 2 of the text. In this regard, I cannot fail to mention the successful playfulness in the approach throughout the three sub-chapters when it comes to two dynamically tense concepts in Valev's texts – the concepts of the world and the home. This approach leads to fundamentally different models of individual and collective identity: "A World without Home: the uprooted model of wandering", "World and

Home: the travelling model of wandering”, “The World as Home: the nomadic model of wandering”. This also reveals a certain creative-writing side of the PhD candidate – the postmodern skill of playing with language.

I will continue with the dialogicity of the text-Kolev, which is realized on three levels. The scientific exposition integrates various plots, making them a part of the selected thematic problem. For example, the second introductory sub-chapter outlines, seemingly in passing, the receptive critical direction towards the work of M. Valev, and the so-called “irresistible captivation” of the biographical readings is explained, thus verbalizing the actual task of the dissertation thesis – “the emancipation from the shackles of biographism”, and the consideration of the nomadic, as a “textual strategy and thematic constellation” (p. 20). In the background flows a dialogue between the three modes of wandering, which while differentiated, underline a complex and diffusive framework, since only the nomadic mode of wandering “ignores or, in the worst case, forgets the native aspect” (p. 58), and at the same time, in the perceptions of the Interwar period, this mode is presented as the “dark side of the native” (p. 61), sometimes including Matvey Valev’s works as well. Thus, on one hand, the dissertation gives, on page 64, a clear-view table of the three models of wandering with their exemplary representatives, and on the other, it accurately presents the specific and complex ways – binary, non-synthetic, liminal, rhizomatic – in which the text-Valev understands and treats the subject of wandering. On a third level, the text-Kolev builds significant intertextual networks between theses of Valev with those of A. Dalchev, B. Raynov, B. Shivachev, D. Shishmanov, Gabe, Bagryana, P. Mateev, Zlatka Cholakova, Olga Chavova, Todor Tsenkov, Vesela Strashimirova, Olga Sirak-Skitnik. These last three names are already an authentic find for the enrichment of the peripheral literary area and, therefore, a contribution to the expansion of the modern literary-historical fields.

Finally, I would like to note one more important thing. The dissertation work is thoughtfully structured – it starts with one of the most presentative characteristics of the man of modernity, who is divided between nature and technology. It then goes through categories of sex and gender, the interest in which was actualized considerably during the Interwar period, due to the interest in Otto Weininger's book “Sex and Character”, and finally the work delves into the problem of the constructed identity and the polar opposite narrative identities of the nomadic subject, brought through comparison of some early poetic texts of B. Raynov and short stories of M. Valev. Raynov, to a certain extent, dramatically shows the traditional (for that time) idea of the

settled Western society, of nomadism as a lower social evolutionary step, as well as its perception as a primitive, underdeveloped variant of state government or personal individuality. The second mobile, traveling subject relies on the narrative act, which enables him to share different versions of his identity, to "try on different faces, to slip on different costumes" (p. 179). And this somehow logically, naturally leads to a possible final answer to the question of why the literary canon, as one of the branches of the State apparatus, does not recognize, neither integrates, Valev's text, "unrestrained" in its "prattle" (p. 180). The text-Kolev ends with this type of circular composition, with which it is discreetly promising to continue the research on this topic in other eras and socio-cultural contexts.

All previously outlined gives me categorical conviction to vote in favor of Martin Plamenov Kolev receiving the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

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Noemi Stoichkova