

SUMMARIES OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

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I. BOOKS

1. *Christianity and Literature. Figures of the (ig)noble* (2023)

Starting with the preface of this book, which follows the long and continuous line of my efforts as a researcher dedicated to the study of the relationship between Christianity and fiction, it becomes clear how long it has taken for this initial idea to develop and mature. The initial impulse was given by a *reception* problem: how to present and interpret the literary work of writers like George Bernanos (we could add up here also Constantin Gheorghiu and to some extent Tahsin Yücel), who have been appreciated *too late* by cultures and literary circles foreign of their own. Key moment for the enlightenment how the initial idea was born, is when one realizes that such fiction writers could be related to the vision of the figure of the *witness* of his time, an idea suggested in the preface which André Malraux writes to Bernanos' novel *The Diary of a Country Priest* in 1974. This link helps to determine the primary circle of writers 'companions', who are called to create the *suitable context* for adequate acquisition of such odd and 'lone' artists into the literature and socio-cultural tradition that usually accepts them much later. Hence forth this step, the transition from the figure of the witness to that of the *(ig)noble personality in literature* seems natural: in the mentioned preface by Malraux to the most famous work of Bernanos such an evolution is only implicit, but to a great extent in the interpretations of the novel through the years, it is also explicit.

The concept of the *noble person*, which will be dealt with in this work, has been defined and exemplified in the first sub-chapter in the first part of the book (*Figures of the (ig)noble in the European novel*). In it two other very significant concepts are developed, related to the concept of theoretical macro framework and scope of the research – the *legacy of the nobility* (and respectively that of *meanness*) and the *vertical realism*, which has been juxtaposed to *cynical realism in literature*. In this first part of the book the exposition is moving – without

following strict chronological principle, in the time span of *Don Quixote* of Cervantes (1605-1615) to the beginning of the XXI century (the latest novel, that has been cited in detail – £9.99 by Frédéric Beigbeder – is from 2003.) In the first part of the book a significant attention has been given to *diary* writings – inside the novel but also outside it. Dealing with it was motivated by the specific characteristics of the mentioned above Bernanos' work as a diary novel, and the novel and the diary have been considered through the perspective of one effective and different in its intensity genre interaction between them.

The second part of my work (*Impulses to the noble in Bulgarian fiction*) steps on the conceptual devices used in the first part of the book, but introduces more *psychobiographical elements*, related to Elin Pelin and Yordan Yovkov – some of the most prominent writers from the post-liberation period in Bulgaria. Those, renowned as masters of the most exquisite writing and storytelling are revisited through the prism of the principle of passing on *the legacy of the noble*, a tradition which the reader has already been acquainted with in relation to foreign authors and their works, who had been touched upon so far in my book. Unlike part one, here the analyst remains entirely in the field of fiction, if we exclude both 'portraits' of E. Pelin and Y. Yovkov, in whose depiction there are also a lot of fictional approaches, and the chronological *span* up to which we reach has been stretched a bit further in time. The latest work that has been examined in this part is the compilation of short stories *Whisper in a Gentle Wind* written by Yancho Mihaylov printed in 2020.

The conclusion of the book is aiming at drawing forward first of all the most prominent accents, defining the characteristics of the three *advancements* that the author considers to have managed to achieve (down the line of the utopian, hetero-topic and dystopian elements; of family and the attitude towards it; the horizontal and vertical of human being), but not alone, rather accompanied by his *readers*. During his literary journey he was trying not to lose sight of them and that is why he could hope that the noble ideal of *homo verticalis*, drawn in the very end will seem as attractive to them as it seemed to him.

2. *The Christian Literature – Separate and Alike* (2013)

The book “The Christian Literature – Separate and Alike” is a first attempt of the author to look for answers to some of the questions a researcher faces, while tackling the phenomenon of contemporary Christian literature, the issues concerning its existence and definition, its specifics and basic characteristics, the modes of its functioning.

The study of this cluster of problems unfolds in the book through some inner logic that I shall present in short. The first and larger part of it has been devoted to the novel, not only as an outgrowth stemming from the ancient epos trunk, but also as a genre, continuing, from the Enlightenment on, to take up an undoubted leading role in the field of literary speech. The introductory text for this part sets off with the familiar debate on the relationship of high versus low literature, but it places it in the context of the Christian novel writing. Here it is being made more concrete through the problems of (non-) directedness (or (non)-predictability) in the unfolding of a novel’s storyline and through the narrator’s role in works that are situated in-between direct edification and exalted tragedy. From this point, logic takes us to the connectedness of the narrator with the “priest” role in a Christian novel, which has been studied by means of two differing in confessional and national mode variations: Catholic and Protestant, French and Bulgarian. The following texts – about “The Space Trilogy” and “The Voyage of the Dawn Treader” by C. S. Lewis and about the novel-writing of Frank Peretti – concern problems, gravitating mainly around the world of the novel in its space dimensions. The interest towards these issues, however, leads inevitably to dealing with the problem of time and there it is: a study of Yovkov’s work “The Reaper” follows, where this problem has been taken to a structural level in the analysis. The analysis is built on the opposition of the lineal character of time “chronos”, and “kairos” – the special, fateful time of intrusion of the eternal into the temporary. In the text concluding the first part of the book, the simultaneous reading of several fiction texts, recreated in Bulgarian in the first decade of this century shows, maybe at first glance paradoxically, but actually quite logically, that in the narrative of the novel the “battle for time” may take priority over the one for space.

The second part of the book begins by clarifying the term “Christian lyric poetry”. In the introductory text an attempt has been made to create a typology of the different kinds of “Christian lyric poetry”, with an emphasis on the dialogic interactions in the poetic world. Next, in separate sections have been illustrated the dimensions of this kind of lyric poetry, in the works of noteworthy authors already mentioned in the introductory text (from Stoyan Mihaylovski to

Jan Twardovski). Therefore, a more personalized principle of presentation is applied, corresponding to the traditional spirit of perceiving the lyrical, as an expression of human subjectivity. Sections on Cyril Hristov and Dora Gabe have been included, due to their borderline works, which are positioned “in-between” the Christian and non-Christian lyric poetry. The analysis of their works helps to make prominent and outstanding in contrast the outlines of the Christian lyrical world that were dealt with in the introductory text of the section.

The book refuses to make a conclusion (even though the final text on “the tear against the abstraction” is suitable as a final chord) because the author is well aware that even after the road has been travelled, the Christian literature will remain difficult to define, especially in theoretical terms. He has not tried to “pin” it as a butterfly in a herbarium, but rather to walk through it and look at it from different sides and from different comparable perspectives, from close-up and further out. After all, in the end of this literary journey, he has gained some confidence that the object of his research has obtained sharper outlines, and so it is truly recognized in the literary landscape, awaiting future explorers.

II. ARTICLES

Dimitar Topolin and the Remodeling of the Sonnet Form

The sonnet in its Shakespearean form holds a prominent place in the poetry of the Bulgarian Orthodox priest Dimitar Popnikolov-Topolin (1886-1962) whose ample oeuvre has only partially been published. This article seeks to situate Topolin’s poems within the seven-centuries old European tradition of this influential lyric genre. As it turns out, Topolin’s numerous sonnet variations consistently work towards overcoming the cult of the superb human personality celebrated as an idol in Western Renaissance classical literary samples. Thus, Dimitar Topolin turns into a unique Bulgarian Orthodox “Shakespeare” who breathes new life into the sonnet form and fills it with the spiritual essence of Eastern Christian sensibility and worldview.

The Works of Jan Twardowski as a Model for Christian Poetry

The article comes as a continuation of its author's engagement with the works of the Polish Catholic poet Jan Twardowski (1915-2006). The outlining of the gradual "acquaintance" of this major artist with his Bulgarian reader and admirer is also a short overview of the still modest reception of Twardowski in Bulgaria. Introduced later on in the article is the distinction made by the Polish poet, and one essential for the debate on Christian literature as a whole, between "patriotic-religious verse", on the one hand, (he has respect for it, however he is not able to write in that spirit) and "religious lyric poetry", on the other. Twardowski uses this distinction to explicate his ideal for religious poetry in the contemporary realm, and the author of the article – to present and substantiate the prospect for a universal model of creating Christian lyric poetry today. In doing so, he draws a few examples from his own poetic works and applies them to illustrate the fruitful impulses being born from his coming in touch with the works of Jan Twardowski.

Dimitar Petkanov's novel *Diary Without Dates* between the fictional and non-fictional narration

The article starts with the less known personality of the Orthodox priest and author Dimitar Petkanov (1886-1962) to then focus on his last literary work – the novel *Diary Without Dates* – which he completed in 1952 but which was published only post-mortem in 2021. In it, the fictional account is interspersed with non-fiction forms, the non-fictional layer of the text consisting mostly of biographical and autobiographical allusions and Biblical texts cited and commented by the diarist. Furthermore, Petkanov's novel features a priest genuinely and selflessly committed to serving God, a character unusual for the Bulgarian literature after the Liberation (1878). Through the analysis of the novel's above-mentioned characteristics, the author seeks to explain what distinguishes it from other novels in which the main character is presented through their diary.

Making one whole of the person from the late works of Stoyan Mihaylovski

Who is the person from the title of this paper? First of all it is the lyrical subject of Stoyan Mihaylovski's poetical works after 1905. But it is also the potential reader of these texts, most of which were published in the periodicals of the day. The interaction between this two institutions - between the author and his audience - should contribute the person's double restoration to take place. Double because it is restoration at a personal and at a social level, of the person's interior and exterior. My paper aims to examine part of the strategies, which Mihaylovski used in order to make this restoration happen. The person in Mihaylovski's texts only seems to “exit” social life, practices and experience, when “entering” literature, while actually he aspires an united, metaphysical wholeness of his personality.

Valkadin and Job – in Silence and Speaking

The article sets to analyze Yovkov's short story “Valkadin talks to God”, not much studied in our literary criticism as a whole. As the title suggests, the reading of the literary work unfolds in juxtaposition. Paralleled are the actions of the suffering Job from the Old Testament and the actions of Yovkov's hero, both of them facing the enormous suffering that has befallen them. The comparison places special emphasis on the manner the Old Testament book and Yovkov's short story view the “speaking up” or the silencing of suffering before oneself, before others and before God, and also on how those surrounding the hero react to his situation: in the first case those are Job's “friends” who came to, as if, share in his suffering, but became his accusers, in the other – Valkadin's family circle, observing from far away his silent and lonely “conversation” with God. In comparing the two works, the varying degree of awareness of their readers has also been taken into account.

In the end, the article suggests the cautious conclusion that unlike Job (from the Bible) the hero from Yovkov's short story who doesn't seem to receive any answer on God's behalf, appears to be at yet another boundary in the literary world of the “Dobrudja singer”, one situated

between the seen and the unseen world, between the explicable and the inexplicable, between the human and the divine. A boundary where, paradoxically, the “things on the verge”, associated with agonizing pain and soul suffering, can be spoken out only through silence.

The image of God in man as a counterpoint to big ideas. Comparative reading of *Crime and Punishment* from a post-totalitarian perspective

Is it possible an idea to take over someone who is inspired by it to such an extent, as to “swallow” them, to completely depersonalize them and to cause them to reduce themselves and their fellow human beings to pure intellectual constructs? The popular statement about the character Kirillov from *Demons*’ by the novel’s protagonist P. Verkhovensky, seems to prove this possible in the world of F. M. Dostoevsky – a reality in which the characters can be “eaten up” by the Napoleonic idea, the concept of man-god, or the belief that if there is no God, everything is permitted, etc. Exploring critical texts from the first volumes of the annual of the German society “Dostoevsky” and from the two serial publications of the Bulgarian society “Dostoevsky”, this article shows how in *Crime and Punishment* the image of God in a person challenges the utopianism of the ideological construction.

Метафизическое зло у Достоевского и его интерпретации в современной болгарской критике

Появившись в результате моего участия в международной конференции «Сила зла в творчестве Достоевского», состоявшейся в начале 2014 года в Университете Западной Бретани, во Франции, данная статья ставит перед собой две задачи. Первая – дать возможность франкоязычной аудитории прикоснуться к достижениям в целом малоизвестной во Франции болгарской достоевистики, в особенности к современным исследованиям; вторая – сделать это при помощи проблемы того внутреннего, глубинного зла, которое я назвал «метафизическим». Речь идёт о зле, «рождённом в душе героя

Достоевского [...], питаемом “проявлениями” идеи, которая предстаёт как тотальная (то есть стремящаяся охватить все человеческое существование), но результаты которой оказываются тоталитарными» (различие между «тотальным» и «тоталитарным» присутствует в эпиграфе к статье, принадлежащем Андре Мальро).

Оказывается, что прочтение наиболее представительных критических работ болгарских авторов, опубликованных в период с 1971 по 2012 год, может быть чётко сфокусировано на трёх основных фигурах из творчества Достоевского, воплощающих для этих авторов метафизическое зло *par excellence* – это образы Наполеона, Дьявола и Великого Инквизитора. Рассмотрение этих фигур идёт поочерёдно, опираясь на интерпретации, принадлежащие критикам с разным исследовательским опытом – литературным, философским, теологическим и даже... математическим. Этот факт объясняется главным образом сложившейся в Болгарии, после политических перемен 1989 года, тенденцией к открытию поля исследований Достоевского для широкого круга ценителей творчества писателя; она нашла свою кульминацию в 2011 году, когда в Софии было основано «Болгарское общество Достоевского» (Българско общество „Достоевски“), сумевшее успешно синхронизировать разнонаправленные интеллектуальные поиски своих членов.

Основным выводом в результате данного прочтения является то, что упор, который болгарские авторы делают на исследовании тотальной или «абсолютной» идеи, которая одержит и терзает героя в романном мире Достоевского – идеи с утопическими чертами и негативными последствиями для него и для окружающих – определённо имеет отношение к пережитому тоталитарному опыту этих исследователей, который скрыт за их критическими текстами (в статье читатель найдёт и «противоядие» от абсолютной идеи – противоядие, предложенное в творчестве Ф. М. Достоевского и подчёркнутое некоторыми нашими критиками). Что касается вопроса о том, почему болгарские исследователи отдают предпочтение фигурам Наполеона и Великого Инквизитора (в ущерб дьяволу), то одним из главных факторов здесь является то, что «...как хорошо засвидетельствованная историческая фигура Наполеона, так и скорее воображаемый образ Инквизитора, обладают определённым историческим существованием – оба конкретно идентифицируемы во времени и наделены повторяющимся символическим значением. И

именно из этой особенности такие фигуры черпают свою внутреннюю ценность для писателя, читателя и исследователя».

Über ein unschuldiges Sprachspiel und seine Übeltäter

Der Aufsatz befasst sich mit der verbalen Kommunikation zwischen Kindern und Erwachsenen im *Märchen von der Zauberperle* des bulgarischen Dichters, Übersetzers und Dramatikers Valeri Petrow (1920–2014), ein Werk, das im Jahr 1983 entstanden ist und als letzter Teil von *Fünf Märchen* drei Jahre später publiziert wurde. Durch die Analyse des Sprachverhaltens der beiden Hauptfiguren, Lilli (ein fünfjähriges Mädchen) und Hrili (ein Tiefseefisch), stellt sich heraus, dass sie allmählich ihre Rollen der „Schülerin“ und des „Lebenslehrers“ (der auch sich für den richtigen Sprachgebrauch verantwortlich fühlt) wechseln und voneinander lernen können.