

SUMMARIES OF THE PUBLICATIONS,

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A. Monographs

1. Hristov, T. *The Sound and The Fury: Archeology of the Marital Quarrels* Sofia University Press: Sofia, 2021), ISBN 978-954-07-5361-4

The object of study is speech in marital quarrels. The argument is based on scenes of quarrels represented in literary, medical, sociological, pedagogical texts, newspaper articles, court hearings, psychiatric cases, transcriptions of therapeutic or everyday conversations. The study amalgamates the methodological perspectives of critical theory, discourse analysis, pragmatics and cultural studies. The goal is to provide an account of the discursive mechanisms that the actors in a marital quarrel use in order to articulate a statement beyond the sayable, for example by means of improvising with language, pragmatic conventions or knowledge. The strategy of the study consists in identifying such messages that the other participants in the scene tend to discard as meaningless voices, or in other words, to ignore them as noises. Starting from such unsayable statements, the analysis outlines their conditions of possibility by tracing the paradigmatic, syntagmatic and negative functions, the concepts, objects, subject positions, discursive modalities that make the statements possible; the mechanisms of desire, knowledge, power, capital triggered by the statements; the effects, strategies and tactics they bring about or open up. The marital scenes analyzed in the book are composed in a narrative about the attempts of teachers, priests, physicians, hygienists, sexologists, psychiatrists, publicists to manage quarrels as a risk both to the families themselves, to the future of their children and to the society in general. The narrative however does not describe the history or the story of such attempts at intervention, it rather tries to account for their geology in the sense of strata of knowledge providing the ground for family therapy (which is of key importance to the general argument as many of the transcripts of conversations are taken from family therapy sessions).

The first chapter, *Discourse Analysis*, reworks the concepts introduced by Michel Foucault so as to make them applicable to domestic scenes rather than to discursive archives. In order to do that, the chapter reframes the concepts of statement and performative act in the works of Foucault by associating it with concepts derived from Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Louis Hjelmslev. The second chapter, *Masculine Domination*, outlines the view of marital quarrels as assaults on masculinity popular in the second half of the 19th century, and shared by many writers, teachers and physicians. The third chapter, *The Abnormals*, discusses a notion that enjoyed wide currency in the field of the late

19th and early 20th public hygiene: if the intensity of marital quarrels exceeds a certain threshold, then the quarrels indicate the abnormality of one of the spouses, usually associated with the discursive figures of the nervous woman, the “bad” woman, the weak-willed husband and the drunkard. Chapter 4, *Dysfunctions*, examines a concept that dominated the emerging discipline of sexology before the World War 2: intense and recurring family quarrels are a symptom of dysfunction or, in other words, of the inability of one or both of the spouses to fulfill her or his function in the family. Chapter 5, *Depth*, discusses the application of the psychiatric concept of trauma in accounts of and interventions in family quarrels. The chapter traces as well the transformations of the concept in the fascist public hygiene (projecting it at a biopolitical level) and in the socialist sexology and psychiatry (reworking it into a sociological optics able to capture the tensions between heterogeneous social positions or trajectories). Chapter 6, *Passionate Speech*, examines the marital quarrels as a regime of passionate speech. The concept of passionate speech is invented by Stanley Cavell, but the chapter reframes it in the context of the project of discursive dramatics proposed but never realized by Michel Foucault in his later years, and associates passionate speech with the concepts of wit, logical time and *passage a l'acte* developed by Jacques Lacan. The afterword discusses the governmental effects of innovative therapies and self-help techniques for managing domestic quarrels that emerged out of family therapy at the turn of the century. The concept of passionate speech developed in this chapter is applicable beyond the domestic scene of a quarrel, to public scandals, political conflicts, protests that fail to formulate any demands, the New Age cultic milieu or to conspiracy theories, as I have tried to demonstrate in another book (*Impossible Knowledge: Conspiracy Theories, Power and Truth*, London and New York: Routledge, 2019). The afterword argues that such therapies and techniques capitalize on desire for emancipation, but they exteriorize, reify and estrange desire so as to be able to sell emancipation as a service, with the additional effect of transforming the therapeutic subjects from individuals into responsible and governable individuals.

I hope that this study will contribute to the emergence of a polemology of everyday life; because everyday life is a political phenomenon, and its seemingly static, undisturbable common-sense order is founded on the debris of domestic revolutions, on the remains of battles; the seemingly banal landscape of our eventless days has been shaped by tacit yet incessant struggles for the right to speak, think, act, live beyond the limits imposed by a particular distribution of the sensible. Such revolutions, battles, struggles, fights often do not leave a discernible trace, they do not bring about winners, losers, traumas, crimes, order, yet they bring forth passion which fire is capable of consuming even our attempts to control or balance it with the powers of reason, ethics, knowledge, anxiety. I hope that if we are able to understand this passion, then even a marital quarrel will not seem just sound and fury; we will be able to make sense even of the voices that we tend to abandon or discard as noise, our voices and the voices of others that we are trying to silence so as to avoid disturbing the plain but flat landscapes of our everyday lives.

2. Hristov, T. *Impossible Knowledge: Conspiracy Theories, Power, and Truth*
(Routledge: London and New York, 2019), ISBN 9780367670290.

Chapter 1, *Suffering*. Conspiracy theorists make impossible knowledge claims, for example of the doings of the secret world government. From the perspectives of social theory or cultural studies, such claims are often explained by suffering. But if suffering was merely personal, it would explain conspiracy theories in terms of personal problems, and so it would fail to explain their currency. Therefore suffering is attributed to social causes – the complex, increasingly fluid nature of late capitalist social order, the anxiety generated by tests of reality like science, bureaucracy, or statistics, the autoimmunization of rationality brought about by neoliberal apparatuses of security. Then the impossible knowledge claims made by conspiracy theorists can be interpreted as defense mechanisms, which are nevertheless flawed because they are trying to change social order from the inside, by postulating a hidden order in the real, and in that sense by reordering the knowledge about social order. The chapter summarizes the accounts of such forms of social suffering in the works of Theodor Adorno, Frederic Jameson, Luc Boltanski, Michel Foucault. The advantages and shortcomings of their approaches are demonstrated by an analysis of the presence of the Zeitgeist movement at #Occupy Wall Street.

Chapter 2, *Desire*. From the perspective of critical theory, the impossible knowledge claims made by conspiracy theorists can be explained by desire. But in order to do that, one has to take into account the distinguishing features of conspiratorial desire – the impossibility of its object, its articulation as an empty signifier covering a constitutive lack in the social order, its emplotment as a phantasmatic scenario of stolen enjoyment, its difference from psychoanalytic conceptualizations of desire, its correlation with hegemony, resentment, repression, and violence. However, the delineation of such distinguishing features would represent nothing but an empty face, if it was not combined with an account of the power of conspiratorial desire, i.e. of its symbolic efficacy, which the chapter derives from the Lacanian concept of passage à l'acte, or passage into act. The distinguishing features of conspiratorial desire are described by concepts developed by Sigmund Freud, Max Scheler, Theodor Adorno, Marc Angenot, Jacques Lacan, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The work of conspiratorial desire is illustrated by a case of conspiracy theory about the oppression of Afro-Americans described by Loïc Wacquant, and the 2002 debates on HAARP and geophysical weapons in the Russian parliament.

Chapter 3, *Power and Truth*. Conspiracy theories are generally studied as beliefs or narratives. But they are also acts of speech, and their pragmatics and dramatics is often neglected. If we do not take it into account, we will not be able to explain neither their power effects, nor their appeal. The chapter tries to do that by reexamining the concept of parrhesia introduced by Michel Foucault, which is conceived as a diagram of the discursive revolutions of the weak as weak, in the sense of Deleuze, and associated with the Foucauldian concepts of discursive practice, discipline, subjugated

knowledge, race war, techniques of the self, truth, and spirituality. Parrhesia is rearticulated in parallel with the concepts of performative developed by John Austin, the concept of passionate utterance proposed by Stanley Cavell, the concept of seduction formulated by Jean Baudrillard, the concept of truth defined by Alain Badiou, the concept of pastoral power introduced by Nikolas Rose. The argument is substantiated by analyses of conspiracy theories in the context of the Indian anti-corruption movement, Bulgarian anti-corruption and anti-GMO protests, self-diagnosis of depression, gluten-free lifestyle, the proclamation of universal sexual emancipation and responsabilization by the prophet of the alien creators, Rael.

Conclusion, *Against Debunking*. Conspiracy theories are increasingly becoming a governmental problem. In effect, they are increasingly targeted by techniques of intervention, usually called debunking. But debunking relies on problematic assumptions, and since it neglects the pragmatics and dramatics of conspiracy theories, it is actually counterproductive. Instead of weakening the conspiracy theories, debunking inadvertently rearticulates them as acts of parrhesia despite of the fact that they tend to violate one or more conditions of possibility of parrhesiastic acts. In consequence, debunking can achieve nothing more than an endless duel between debunkers and conspiracy theorists, which could escalate into reconceptualization of distrust as a security and medical problem. In order to substantiate the argument, I have tried to bring together the concepts of social suffering, defense mechanism, passage into act, passionate utterance, and infelicitous parrhesiastic act developed in the preceding chapters in the context of the thought of Michel Foucault, Frederic Jameson, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Stanley Cavell. The counterproductive effects of debunking are illustrated by the right-wing conspiracy theory that the U.S. President was secretly replaced by an alien cyborg, which became viral in 2011.

B. Articles in indexed academic journals

1. Hristov, T. Rights to Weapons: Social Rights as a Resource in Workplace Conflicts in Late Socialist Bulgaria. *East Central Europe*, 2019 46.2-3: 240-260, ISSN: 0094-3037 (Scopus).

Social rights are essentially rights to betterment of life. And because of this, they lack any internal principle of limitation. Socialist governments recognized social rights as the core of human rights and therefore as perfect rights, which implementation was a matter of obligation rather than of policy. However, since the governments commanded limited resources, they had to limit the implementation of social rights. The paper describes the ad hoc limitations on the implementation of social rights, developed by the Bulgarian Communist Party. which brought forth their transformation into instruments of government, and their appropriation by different forms of counter-conduct.

B. Articles in peer-reviewed journals

1. Biopolitics and the Problem of Surplus Population *Sociological Problems* 2021 53.1: 221-236, ISSN 0324-1572.

Biopolitics and the Problem of Surplus Population (abstract): Marx defined the value of labour power by the labour time socially necessary for its reproduction. But reproduction of labour time requires more than just the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the power of an individual life, because labour power is to be reproduced beyond the living individual, at the scale of the population. Therefore, the value of labour power has a biopolitical dimension, which can be read through Marx's comments on biological reproduction of the workers, the inevitable exhaustion of the individual labour power, the mortality, death, and birth rate in the workers' families. The paper claims that if we take into account that biopolitical dimension, the value of labour power would depend also on surplus population. Building on that, I will try to demonstrate, in the context of fake news production, that the surplus labour channeled by the social media has transformed the biopolitical apparatuses of security into relays crucial to the operation of the labour market, and in that sense, that the reproduction of labour power has become productive, production and exploitation have become coextensive with life.

2. *Practical Logic and Common-Sense Rationality of Power. Heterodoxia* 2020 1-2: 187-206, ISBN 2738-7569.

The article offers a discussion of a series of performative acts that apply conventions to inappropriate objects yet turn out to be felicitous. I try to demonstrate that although the felicity of such performative acts is unexplainable in the perspective of illocutionary logic, it is accountable for in the conceptual framework of the practical logic developed by the Institute for Critical Social Studies. However, the praxeological account is unable to explain the regimes of veridiction inscribed in such performative acts. Thus, in order to account for the ability of the actors to make decisions and choose their behavior in common-sense situations, the praxeological explanation of the common-sense operation of power should be supplemented with description of the practical rationality of power conceived as a radical phenomenon in the ethnomethodological sense.

3. *The Virus of Responsibility. Heterodoxia* 2020 1-2: 501-12, , ISBN 2738-7569.

The current pandemic has affected deeply our everyday lives. That is an unprecedented achievement because modern quarantines usually crumbled if they tried to control or arrest the daily lives of cities, even in troubled times like the cholera outbreaks in the 19th century, or the Spanish flu epidemic in the early 20th century. The article argues that the deeper and more extensive impact of the measures aimed at defending life from Covid-19 can be explained by the intensive responsabilization, i.e. by the development of a power regime that constitutes all and everyone as subjects of responsibility to a potentially vulnerable population. Building on that, the article discusses the problematic side effects of the responsabilization in the context of the current pandemic, and tries to outline a critical practice able to question responsibly our biopolitical responsibility.

4. *Conspiracy and Vulnerability: #Occupy, Zeitgeist and the Legitimation of Rebelious Knowledge. Critique and Humanism* 2017 47.2: 205-230, ISSN 0861-1718.

In the autumn of 2011, one of the working groups of #Occupy Wall Street discussed the idea of endorsing the concepts of the Zeitgeist films as an official ideology of the movement. The idea was ultimately dismissed, but since the Zeitgeist films were heavily influenced by Alex Jones, in order to do so the working group needed to develop a dividing line between conspiracy theories and the rebellious knowledge about the injustice of the 1%, which had inspired #Occupy. As the dividing line was to be drawn in discussion, which foreclosed any argument founded on authority, in fact any argument that implied asymmetrical distribution of knowledge, the theories of conspiracy theories turned out to be useless. Therefore the working group developed a concept of conspiracy theory suitable for its practical purposes, and shaped by what the participants perceived as strategic vulnerabilities. Their concept claimed that a conspiracy theory was any theory that can be accused of being one, and as this concept could be extended to any theory of injustice, the working group ultimately decided to recommend that #Occupy should not have any ideology. Later, the lack of ideology was widely criticized as a crucial vulnerability of the movement. Of course, this paper would not attribute this vulnerability to the rejection of the Zeitgeist films. Yet I will claim that the discussion of the films exemplifies a risk brought about by the concept of conspiracy theory, the risk of making any dissent vulnerable to accusations of irrationality.

5. *Safe Liaisons: Risk Management and Online Seduction. Seminar BG* 2018: 17, ISSN 1313-9932.

The paper claims that seduction consists in conducting the desire of the other, and in that sense online dating is a form of seduction as far as it is geared at provoking in the others the desire to respond. However, online dating is targeted at a collective and virtual other, whose desire is essentially

unknown, and in order to be able to make decisions, the users need to calculate, optimize and control risks, and to balance them against the expected benefits, without being able to rely on the tacit knowledge they employ in their everyday lives. Building on that, I am trying to demonstrate that online dating is a regime of security in the sense developed in the later works of Michel Foucault.

6. Non-serious religion: Jediism as a regime of responsabilization. *Seminar BG* 2017: 14, ISSN 1313-9932.

The paper claims that Jediism, one of the popular invented religions, is articulated as a practice of the self assembled individually from heterogeneous elements drawn from "Star Wars" films, other forms of fiction, other religions, New Age subcultures, popular psychology etc. The analysis is focused on Jediist declarations of faith in legal context, and in the context of the online community of the Temple of the Jedi Order. Building on this, the paper proposes an account of Jediism as an exemplary neoliberal religion shaped as a regime of responsabilization that allows the followers to chose their religion, and at the same turn invites them to calculate their choices as entrepreneurs of themselves trying to make religion valuable in addressing their personal problems.

7. Truth and Passion in common-sense conflicts. *Language and Public Sphere* 2018 2: 181-195, ISSN 2367-5765.

The paper claims that performatives of the type 'that is the truth' cannot be explicit in common-sense circumstances. The mechanism that forecloses their explicit form is explained by the fact that they are articulated as passionate utterances grounded on improvisations with the knowledge of conventional procedures, which transgress the accepted procedures in order to produce an effect of actuality unattainable by any conventional speech act. The argument is substantiated by an analysis of a common-sense quarrel at a family therapy session geared to illustrate the power effects of the actuality brought about by that type of performative acts.

8. *Context, big data, and user individualization. Piron* 2017 14, ISSN 2367-7031.

The paper claims that context is an effect of contextualization, that contextualization is involved not only in common-sense or critical interpretations, but also in the operation of large-scale security apparatuses like the police, as well as that contextualization is characterized by a particular economy. Building on this, I will try to demonstrate that big data have brought about a radical transformation of the economy of police contextualization allowing the application of statistical technologies not only to territorialized populations, but also to the behavior of deterritorialized or

individualized populations like internet users, social media networks, or activist groups. The claim is substantiated by an analysis of two cases of user profiling taken from the NSA documents released by Edward Snowden.

9. *Neurasthenia and Injustice. Littera et Lingua* 2017 1, ISSN 1312-6172.

The paper is conceived as a discussion of a short story by Constantin Constantinov, “Neurasthenia”. The point of the discussion is to provide an account of the transformation of common-sense psychiatric knowledge accessible to Constantinov into local, situated knowledge of social injustice that intensifies into the counter-knowledge that one is unable to know what is or what should be the value of life, a counter-knowledge of particular relevance in the context of neoliberal capitalization of life.

10. Displaying Justice: Superheroes as a Political Resource. *Piron* 2014 7, ISSN 2367-7031.

The paper claims that context is an effect of contextualization, that contextualization is involved not only in common-sense or critical interpretations, but also in the operation of large-scale security apparatuses like the police, as well as that contextualization is characterized by a particular economy. Building on this, I will try to demonstrate that big data have brought about a radical transformation of the economy of police contextualization allowing the application of statistical technologies not only to territorialized populations, but also to the behavior of deterritorialized or individualized populations like internet users, social media networks, or activist groups. The claim is substantiated by an analysis of two cases of user profiling taken from the NSA documents released by Edward Snowden.

D. Chapters in Collective Monographs

1. Hristov, T. Suspicious Fictions: The Fictionalizing Acts in a Conspiracy Novel. Carver, Ben, Craciun, Dana, Hristov, Todor (eds.) *Plots: Literary Form and Conspiracy Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 147-163, ISBN 9780367500696.

Conspiracist narratives are certainly not factual, but are they fictional? In *The Fictive and the Imaginary* Wolfgang Iser defines the constitution of fictional narratives by three types of acts: selection, combination, and self-disclosure. Iser claims that the acts of selection and combination are

constitutive of fictions in general, including fictions essential to institutions, societies, or world pictures, while the act of self-disclosure is specific to literary fiction. The concept of fictionalizing acts has been used in arguments that conspiracy theories mask their fictional nature, so they are foreign to literature and, therefore, if they are transposed in the domain of literature, they self-disclose their fictionality and stimulate critical reflection. However, the transposition of conspiracist narratives in literature can also produce two different types of effects: the narratives can self-disclose as fictional the act of their self-disclosure as fiction, and in that sense they can redouble the fictionalizing act of self-disclosure; the narratives can develop the act of selection into a complex regime of circulation of patterns, techniques, and representations across the borders of the literary domain making undecidable the dividing line between literature and conspiracy theory. The chapter tries to demonstrate those effects by an analysis of a popular Bulgarian conspiratorial novel, *The Wolf Trap* by Hristo Kalchev. The analysis of the novel and its conflicting readings demonstrates how fictionalizing acts can be put into play by the transposition of conspiracist narratives in literature as well as overspill the borders of literature, into the domains of literary and social critique.

2. Hristov, T., N. Blanuša. Psychoanalysis, Critical Theory and Conspiracy theories. In: Knight, P., M. Butter (eds.) *Handbook of Approaches to Conspiracy Theories* (Routledge: London and New York, 2020), 67-80, ISBN 9780815361749.

This chapter summarizes psychoanalytic accounts of conspiracist thinking. Since seeing ominous conspiracies behind the facade of power has come to seem pathological in the wake of the disastrous consequences of the mass political movements and totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century that were prone to conspiracist thinking, many historians, political scientists and sociologists tried to explain conspiracism as a symptom of paranoia, or as a form of obsessive-compulsive behaviour. The chapter maps out the historical origins of the concept of paranoia, the political application of this approach in social theory, and the theory of fantasy developed by Jacques Lacan, which, along with its reinterpretation by Slavoj Žižek, provides a way of explaining the compulsive desires that seem to drive conspiracist thinking. Finally, the chapter considers the interpretations of conspiracy theories in postmodern culture as symptomatic of the deep structure of capitalism itself rather than of individual psychology.

3. Hristov, T. and I. Ivanova. An Open Secret: Freemasonry and Justice in Post-socialist Bulgaria. Astapova, A., Colacel, C., Pintilescu, C. (eds.) *Conspiracy Theories in Eastern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 110-124, ISBN 9780367344771.

Freemasonry was relative active in pre-war Bulgaria, but it was obliterated by the communist government. It was reborn after 1989, and the masonic lodges soon started to bring together intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, and agents of the former State security, usually in moderately priced Sofia restaurants. But the resuscitated freemasonry did not act very surreptitiously. Quite on the contrary, the masonic lodges wrote projects, and competed with other non-governmental organizations for funding, the prominent members frequented the talk shows and debate studios on the national television, in fact, the grand lodge even published a lavishly decorated book intended to dazzle the general public, *100 most important Bulgarian freemasons* (2015). We will claim that in the case of postsocialist Bulgaria, freemasonry was constituted as an open secret in the sense developed by Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida. In brief, an open secret is articulated as an empty signifier functioning as a placeholder for a latent content withheld from knowledge, which is constitutive for a particular type of social interaction, and therefore has to be both kept in secret and betrayed. We will claim that the open secret constitutive of the public and social capital of the Bulgarian freemasonry consists, at least in part, in its association with the former security services. We will also try to demonstrate that the constitution of the affiliation with the secret services as an open secret through the empty signifier of freemasonry immunized it against criticism quite more effectively than justifications, rationalizations, or nostalgic references to the socialist past. In order to substantiate that claim, I will analyze the 2016 protests against corruption in judiciary, which tried infelicitously to repeat the mass 2013 protests against corruption (the 2016 protests were organized around the conspiratorial argument that postsocialist condition was unjust because of the lack of justice, the lack of justice was caused by the corrupt judicial system, and the corruption was caused by the former secret services which controlled the judiciary by means of the masonic lodges).

4. Hristov, T. *Tame Domesticity and Timid Trespasses (Pilgrimages, Travellers, Business Trips, Escapes, and Exoduses)*. In: Kambourov, D., Harper, M. (eds.) *Bulgarian Literature as World Literature* (Bloomsbury: New York, 2020), 149-158, ISBN 9781501348112.

The modern world, quite like the modern museums, was articulated as *galeria progressiva*, a linear series of stages of progressive development superimposed over real territories or spaces. In effect, the Bulgarian travelers to Europe and the United States traveled also in time. Yet time traveling produced the anxiety of being out of joint with time. The anxiety was amplified by the moments of wonder in which the travelers were immersed in the marvelous possessions of the other people as well as by the resonance of seemingly meaningless yet intensive details that produced an incongruity between the visible and the sayable about Bulgaria. The chapter outlines the discursive mechanism of

that anxious time traveling by analyzing Aleko Konstantinov's *To Chicago and Back*, perhaps the most influential Bulgarian travelogue, and its impact on other Bulgarian writers and travelers.