

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. PhD. Elka Traykova

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for the award of the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

degree to Martin Plamenov Kolev

"The Nomadic Subject in the Work of Matvei Valev: Nature and Machine".

Professional field – Philology

Bulgarian Literature from the Liberation to the

From Liberation to the Second World War

Martin Kolev's dissertation was discussed and proposed for defence at a meeting of the Department of Bulgarian Literature at the Faculty of Slavic Philology at Sofia University „Saint Kliment Ohridski“. The work is structured in six chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. In the first chapter of the dissertation M. Kolev argues the choice of the theme of nomadism and the interpretation of the different dimensions of the image of the wanderer in the work of Matvei Valev as an effort to add new touches and interpretations to his life and creative portrait. It outlines the matrix that denotes the supporting research model consistently applied in the text. The theoretical network created by different methodological methods is cemented by the conceptual paradigm developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The interpretive framework of nomadism, of wandering, of movement, the constant change of topoi and images link the different thematic fields of the thesis. Through the lens of the artistically provocative issues identified in the individual sections of the thesis, the dissertation interprets the manifestations, roles, and uses of nomadism in an expanded literary-historical and sociocultural context. The analysis insists on breaking away from familiar critical models, and beneath the obvious visibility of meaning and artistic message, seeks a different, ornate, yet typologized image of the writer in selectively chosen works. Insisting on a sharp and a categorical boundary, which, however, turns out to be rather labile and permeable, between the author-Vulev and the text-Vulev, M. Kolev tries to avoid the charismatic appeal of the biographical and to objectify his literary discourse.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, "The figure of the nomad through the sedentary gaze: from object of observation to postmodern subject," the dissertation makes profound observations on the transformations that the figure of the nomad undergoes, its impossible and unwanted social situatedness in different historical contexts, and its possible roles in different cultural realities. M. Kolev shows interesting interdisciplinary intersections tracing wandering as an existential choice, accompanied by negative connotations, but also magnetically attractive as an object of artistic representation from antiquity to the end of the twentieth century.

In chapter two of the dissertation, the author plays out different narratives - contrasting, elaborating - to mark a series of variations on the theme of wandering in Bulgarian literature up to the Second World War. Within the theoretical framework he has constructed, he encounters the notions of world and home of classical and marginal characters, which reveal unexpected meaning potential in the oppositions and affinities between them. The motif of collective identity is traced through the sacred notion of the native and the traumatic sense of the rootless individual in the periods of modernity, postmodern deconstructions and beyond. The literary material Martin Kolev works with covers a wide chronological and thematic range. Despite a respectable volume of Christomatic exemplars and lesser-known works, the dissertation sustains a well-structured and logically-coherent concept.

In chapter three, the dissertation creates a mosaic of thematic fields in which it examines perspectives from this side and beyond in the interpretation of the wanderer as a character in Matvei Valev's works. Here, he cannot completely ignore the biographical figuration as a receptive context or the autobiographical codes he relies on in the works. The parallel with J. Yovkov as a humanist writer is provocative, but not particularly convincing, if only for applying an overused critical label to the wanderer and adventurer writer. The models of wandering he constructs, of possible and impossible return, of home as a center of attraction but also of escape from it, do not belong to the conservative and settled space of the native. They create stable bridges between alien worlds, they insist on the overcoming, the displacement, the breaking down of the barriers between one's own and the alien, of prejudices against the other. The author analyzes wandering as an existential choice, accompanied by negative connotations, but also magnetically attracting M.'s characters. Valev, the inability of the free nomadic spirit to respect the regulations of law or the moral and ethical boundaries of society.

The functions of nature and technology are the subject of an analysis in chapter four of the dissertation: 'Snakes, butterfly collages and radio waves: the man of modernity between nature and technology'. What is undeniable is the dissertator's ability, under attractive titles, to create a plastic, engaging, yet terminologically precise plot, to make serious generalizations about man in nature or nature without him through concrete details. It is seen in different contexts, perceived as a decorative background, a metaphor or a symbolic sign. Breaking away from the stereotypes and clichés of interpretation, he traces how it expresses or subordinates the creative human impulse, embodying the freedom of the wandering spirit but also the dramatic insight into vulnerable corporeality. Provoking approval or polemical impulse, M. Kolev build theoretical constructs on the texts of M. Valev, they emphasize the complex symbolism of images. He transforms the objects of analysis through the perceptual attitudes of the nomad characters, problematizing their existential experience, everyday existence, memories and adventures.

In each part of the dissertation, M. Kolev builds a series of binary oppositions. These are stated most forcefully in chapter five of the dissertation, "The Natural Woman, the Man-Machine, and Wandering as Coniunctio: Gender and Generic Dimensions of the Text-Volev." The opening of the woman wanderer to the exotic spaces of the foreign and the other, as a counterpoint to the native, the tracing of their reflections in literature as personal gestures is presented as a fictional possibility in the fiction of M. Valev. These outbursts of the feminine impulse for volubility and defiance, for radical disruption of the conservative patriarchal status quo, are inscribed in two models: the natural woman and the domestic woman. The resistant matrices through which they function in M. Valev. These rather large constructs also create gaps in the dissertation's conception, because both love and dramatic changes in female identity and the complex psychological nuances of behavior are difficult to fit into them.

In the context of the overall design of the dissertation, the designation of the essential characteristics of "narrative identity" in the texts of M. Valev are undeniably important. According to the dissertator, by narrating himself he creates his authentic and persistent personal identity in cultural memory. The complex multi directionality, of his plots, unexpectedly interrupted, abruptly pushing back the expected unfolding, not only thickens the tension of the reader's expectation and maintains the high levels of surprise, they create a vivid and recognizable style in Bulgarian literature.

M. Kolev creates a thematically structured literary-historical narrative in which he seeks a synthesis between concrete analytical observations and the theoretical theses of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari used as a key to understanding the problems he poses. This provocative and productive reading of some of Matvei Valev's prose is one of the significant contributions of the dissertation.

The abstract accurately and clearly articulates both the content of the dissertation and its contributions. The doctoral candidate has submitted 10 scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation. The scientific qualities outlined in the opinion, as well as compliance with all legal requirements, give me grounds to confidently propose that Martin Kolev be awarded the degree of PhD.

14.09.2023

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