

ANNOTATION

The book *Bulgarian Literature: Stories, Contexts, Studies* contains texts evincing my research interests at different times over the years. I have dealt therein with the way our literature presents the images of man who goes through many hardships in the process of self-making; I have uncovered the reasons for his (in)ability to adhere to ethical principles, legal norms and restrictions; I have defined the roles he is forced, or he himself chooses, to play while striving to fit in some social circles or distance himself from them. The texts aim to look at various aspects of human life in our contemporary literature. Also, they aim to look at the reception of some of its works in the (re)publishing process largely determined by the ideological and/or literary-aesthetic paradigms dominating over time, at their translation into the language of another art (cinema, the art of painting) and their translation into foreign languages.

Part One, *Temptation and Redemption*, unifies five texts in which I have attempted to explain the preference within our literature for some and „forgetfulness” of other characters and motifs related to the views of women („Water and/or Champagne: Images of Temptation in Bulgarian Literature”, „The Slavic Woman as Mirrored in Bulgarian Literature”, „Wanton Women in Bulgarian Literature”, „Error and Sin in Yordan Yovkov’s Works,” „The Golgothas of Bulgarian „Queens”). Works of various periods of literary history and cultural traditions enter into their own kind of dialogue. Thematological research carried out on the basis of a large body of art and non-art material shows the attitude of literature toward certain spheres of life (cultural, social, socio-political), toward valuative, moral and aesthetic attitudes as well as toward fears and prejudices that prevail at a given time.

Part Two – *Worlds, Desires and Sufferings*, includes texts in which I analyze the varied (sometimes painful) existences of man in the world, his attempts to preserve the moral image of the past while integrating himself into modern society („Flying with an Angel’s Feather”, „The Village and Farm Machinery in Bulgarian Fiction after World War I”, „Capital and Countryside in Dimitar Dimov’s Novels”, „Authorities’ and ‘Sinners’ in Emilian Stanev’s Prose”, „Punishment in Emilian Stanev’s Novels”, „The Labor Camp Heterotopia: Observations on the novels *The Camp of Loose Women* by Anton Balazs and *Calm, White Danube* by Atanas Lipchev”). Part Two generates (in regard mainly to the works of Emilian Stanev and A. Lipchev) alternative angles on the concepts of sin and guilt, of power, control and punishment, of enduring suffering and death. Although created at different times and under different circumstances, the works of Yordan Yovkov, Angel Karaliychev, Georgi

Karaslavov, Chudomir, Dimitar Dimov, Emilian Stanev, Atanas Lipchev and Anton Balazh show that, when facing critical situations, one has the opportunity to (re)consider one's identity, to seek or to refuse to follow the path to change and/or salvation.

Some of the texts in part three, *Viewpoints: (In)congruities*, look at the ways in which literature interacts with film and the art of painting („Yovkov's Pictures", „A Story about Storytelling", „Paratexts in the Novels of Dimitar Dimov: Reading Strategies", „Films in Dimitar Dimov's Novels and His Novels As Films", „Between Prison and Garden"). Other texts show or hint at possible directions in which one could seek the intersections between our (Bulgarian) and other (Slavic) storytelling traditions and at the same time correctly assess any of the translation choices („The Third Edition. Yovkov's Short Story 'The Harvester' and Its Slovak Translation", „Bulgarian Literature in Slovakia and Slovak Literature in Bulgaria after 1989"); they follow and comment on the (re)publishing of some authors and books as a result of specific socio-political and socio-cultural circumstances („Yovkov's Short Stories: Editions and Re-editions").

Although technically included in various parts of the book, the texts clear up several issues that underlie the whole study.

The first of them is the *contemptus mundi* attitude that one is confronted with. Special attention has been paid to women since the problem of emancipation is the most complex and delicate one within the context of the dominant patriarchal norms. But if the devilish side of a woman is the result of erotic temptations or ethical prejudices, the devilry that machinery suggests is a problem of another order: capital (profit), knowledge and mistrust are all tied in intriguing knots of heteroglossic stances on technological innovations, particular institutions and so on. We have seen already that temptations can be related to a specific place – the home of a wanton woman, a pub, a ship, the stage. Changes in the cultural-historical landscape also affect the very nature of alluring things: basically, temptations now tend come from the big city (the capital), foreign countries, and power. Oftentimes, the tempted person can become a tempter or temptress to others and start leading them along the paths of enticing otherness that opens before his eyes. By succumbing to temptation, one makes mistakes, commits acts of betrayal and crime, but also gains experience and knowledge of other people and other worlds, gets the chance to (re)think one's life and to seek alternatives to one's existence.

Another problem closely related to that of temptation is dissatisfaction with the present, which ignites one's deeply cherished dreams of leaving one's familiar world. Some of the characters pursue a non-patriarchal way of life and try to disregard both the rules of conduct imposed on them by tradition and the social roles assigned to them. Others try in

every way to get away from rural „life” that prevents them from realizing their potential and becoming successful, rich and powerful. And for still others, the pursuit of another kind of life is commensurate with utopian views of the future. Filling the gaps in his life, one, whether accidentally or intentionally, violates or disregards community norms.

The third set of problems in the book reveals that a person, being a member of a community, has to adopt its rules, norms and hierarchies, but at the same time he or she is in revolt over them because they tend to restrict his freedom and right of choice. The multi-aspect relationship between individual and community gives a clearer picture of when and why someone confronts the community. For example, if one has no virtue at all, this will mark one forever as „weird,” dooming one to a life of marginalization and suffering. But one, as long as one has formed one’s own conception of life and the world, may oneself decide to leave the community and consciously deviate from its norms and ideas in order to live out one’s dream of another kind of life. In this respect, it is equally important for our literature to show not only the way the members of a community make sense of and assert themselves but also how the individual does so and how he or she copes with the „otherness” of his or her own self and/or the world. The works under study also help us see how (insurmountable) boundaries are fixed between people as a result of prejudices and fears of ethnic aliens as well as of anyone else who for one reason or another turns out to be alien to the community.

Disobedience (finding expression in total disregard of the patriarchal tradition, in the espousal of heresies, certain ideologies, etc.) usually leads to the imposition of appropriate punishment. Its purpose is to heal those who have become social outcasts and help them re-join their communities. The punishment itself can be public, but it may also be administrative action hidden from the eyes of the many. In any event, it is administered by virtue of power. As already seen in the course of our analysis, the effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness of state power manifests itself when it encounters opposition. Supervision, control and obedience – these are the important levers of any power. Having dealt with the works in the various parts of the book, we have attempted to show both the artistic representation of power and its impact on literature itself, i.e. the way it affects the process of shaping the public images of authors and books, the development (or lack of it) of certain publishing or translation strategies.

In almost all literary works analyzed so far, suffering, which is closely related to the problems of power and punishment, has been understood to entail both redemption and a peculiar kind of human resurrection.

Another no less important problem is that of one's (in)ability to handle difficult situations (the war, the events of September 1923, the technocratic invasion of traditional life and culture, the transition to a new socio political order, etc.). Facing such circumstances, one tries not only to adapt to whatever looks new and unfamiliar, but also to survive. Thus one's astonishment results from the fact that one is „suddenly” overwhelmed by that novelty without the slightest possibility of walking the path of one kind of life (being) and prosperity to another. This also gives the sense that one has been uprooted from one's homeland, that one's „own” world has been taken away. Even when one fails to formulate it clearly, one realizes that such a critical situation will completely change one's usual pattern of life. Moreover, one will no longer be (and cannot be) the same.

In all the works dealt with in the book, goodness, mercy and love are approbated as pillars of human existence regardless of what kind of crises could arise – social, socio-political, and personal. The issue of forgiveness often intertwines with other issues: punishment and retribution as well as finding the life-saving path to the future.

THE SCHOLARLY MERIT OF THE BOOK

1. The book has examined the destiny of Yovkov's works taking shape in multiple subsequent editions and the ways in which specific socio-political and cultural circumstances influenced the publishing and editorial decisions.

2. We have also looked at the interrelationship between literature and art, which is explained in the analytical reading of Yovkov's works through the illustrations therein. The mechanisms creating pictures verbally in his military short stories have also been analyzed, a problem that has not yet become the subject for an in-depth literary study.

3. We have clarified the conceptualizing role of the cover design of Dimitar Dimov's novels and have also elucidated the formative influence this art exerted on some perceptual attitudes toward his works.

4. An in-depth study has been conducted on the problems of Bulgarian literature in Slovakian translation and Slovakian literature in Bulgarian translation after the fall of the socialist regime in the late 1980s with respect to the changes that took place in translation.

5. The book has proposed a strategy for reading the images of classic works of Bulgarian cinema, such as Dimov's novels „Tobacco” and „Doomed Souls” and Emilian Stanev's novella „The Thief of Peaches”.

6. Two problems in Emilian Stanev's works have been approached from various angles: one's rebellion against the norms of society, restricting one's freedom and right of choice, and the punishment one is doomed to suffer for his disobedience.

7. The book has analyzed the numerous post-war ordeals that people went through while attempting to adapt to the new way of life.

8. By having recourse to both literary and non-literary material, the study has tackled the problems of the image of woman (as) temptress and the worldly temptations that she has to overcome in the process of her emancipation.

9. We have discussed in great detail the ways in which the cultural topoi of 'capital' and 'countryside' function in Dimov's novels whose stories are set in Bulgaria.