

Opinion

by Associate Professor Moris Name Fadel,

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on the dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "PhD,"

Field of Higher Education 2. Humanities,

Professional field 2.1. Philology,

Doctoral Program in English Language Literature

Author: Dimitar Karamitev

Subject: "Historicity and Fictionality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

(Based on Wolfgang Iser and Paul Ricoeur)"

Academic Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Yana Atanasova Rowland, PhD,

Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

Dimitar Karamitsev's dissertation, "Historicity and Fictionality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy (Based on Wolfgang Iser and Paul Ricoeur)" is an in-depth study of Thomas Hardy's literary legacy that highly fulfills the requirements for a PhD thesis. In it, we find not only a thorough knowledge of Hardy's texts and the literature on them, but also an argued view of the author's works that is both literary-historical and literary-theoretically supported.

Chapter one presents the literary-theoretical foundations of the work. The author of the dissertation builds a network of ideas from different theorists. The main focus is on Paul Ricoeur's

notions of historicity and Wolfgang Iser's notions of fictionality, but Karamitev also discusses the views of Reinhart Koselleck, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Robert Jauss. In the dissertation, the "pairing" between Iser's notion of fictionality and Ricoeur's notion of historicity is convincingly realized. According to Ricoeur, historicity has nothing to do with the factual side of time but is the subjective experience of what takes place. On the other hand, according to Iser, fictionality is not opposed to history but accompanies it, expressing our attitude towards the past.

In the following chapters, the thesis examines various aspects of Hardy's legacy in which the interplay between the historical and the fictional is highlighted: the place of photography and light in the author's narrative strategy, the influence of fact and historical context, the conflict between tradition and the new, tragedy and the individual. Much could be said about this rich examination of the novelist's work, but I would draw attention to that part of the thesis that analyzes Hardy's 'photographic moments'.

Chapter three examines Hardy's early novels and his version of realism. However, instead of reiterating well-known points about nineteenth-century literary realism and its realization in English literature, Karamitsev finds a surprising perspective: the relationship between early Hardy's realistic descriptions and the photographic image. The author of the dissertation derives his thesis from several elements: 1) biographical—Thomas Hardy's interest in fine art and architecture; 2) social—the increasingly significant place of photography in the author's time; 3) literary—the presence of a peculiar "photographic sensibility" in Hardy's discourse. The work's "opening" to other sign systems and arts gives it not only originality but also interdisciplinarity. It allows us to look at realism in a new "materialistic" way: its relationship to technical progress and photography.

As far as I can judge, the dissertation is written in excellent English. The abstract in Bulgarian and English correctly reflects the content and contributions of the dissertation. I have not noticed any moments of plagiarism.

I appeal to the esteemed scientific jury to award Dimitar Karamitsev doctoral degree in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, scientific field 2.1. Philology.

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Assoc. Prof. Moris Fadel