

OPINION

by **Prof. Kalina Grozeva Lukova, DSn,**
retired, guest lecturer at Burgas Free University

on dissertation paper for awarding the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**”

in: higher education field 2. The Humanities

professional line 2.1. Philology

doctor’s programme **Antique and Western European Literature: comparative study of literature**

Author: Vesela Atanasova Ganeva

Topic: “The music and the novel of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century (problems of ekphrasis and duration)”

Academic adviser: Prof. Kleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, DSn

1. General presentation of the procedure and the DSn candidate

I was nominated by Order No. RD-21-1146 dated 03.06.2024 by the Rector of ‘Paisii Hilendarski’ University of Plovdiv (UP) as a member of the scientific jury for the performance of the doctoral dissertation on topic “The music and the novel of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century (problems of ekphrasis and duration)” for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in higher education field 2. The Humanities, professional line 2.1. Philology, doctor’s programme Antique and Western European Literature: comparative study of literature. Author of the dissertation is Vesela Atanasova Ganeva – DSn candidate in fulltime study at Department “History of literature and comparative study of literature”, with Academic adviser Prof. Kleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, DSn, from Paisii Hilendarski’ University of Plovdiv. The set of materials on paper submitted by Vesela Atanasova Ganeva is in conformity with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations on the development of the academic membership in UP and it includes the following documents: application to the Rector of UP for opening the procedure of dissertation defense; European format CV; minutes of the meeting of the Department related to reporting the readiness of opening the procedure and to preliminary discussions of the dissertation; dissertation thesis; author’s summary; list of scientific publications on the dissertation topic; copies of the scientific publications; declaration of originality and veracity of the attached documents.

The DS_n candidate has attached 5 articles in magazines with scientific reviews and also references from the National Centre of Information and Documentation (NACID).

Brief biographic data of the candidate

Vesela Atanasova Ganeva graduated the master's programme "Contemporary Bulgarian Studies" at 'Paisii Hilendarski' UP in 2019. Since 2021 she is a DS_n candidate in Antique and Western European Literature and leads exercises in this subject at the same university. She is taking part in scientific forums and she is working on international projects.

2. Actuality of the subject matter

The range of aspects of the dissertation is to a high extent topical, because the presentation of a musical theme in novels from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century through the techniques of ekphrasis and duration is projecting important problems of the digital communication in the modern society. The musical preferences of the characters are studied as an effect of the multimedia technologies influence on the personality and the community.

3. Awareness of the problem

Vesela Ganeva is demonstrating excellent knowledge in the interdisciplinary range of aspects in the field of musical theory, science of art, philosophy, theory of literature and literary criticism. She is using correctly and purposefully the bibliography in Bulgarian and English. She is working with literary texts creatively and with contribution.

4. Research methods

The chosen methods include theoretical and comparative analysis of ekphrasis techniques and models in the novels of Jennifer Egan, Zadie Smith, Emily Dvoryanova, etc., resulting in successful study of the musical ekphrasis functions in the literary text and identification of the new listener, called contemporary, as a character.

5. Characteristics and appraisal of the dissertation and the contributions

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, two attachments and bibliography. The working hypothesis is that "the contemporary novels, using the musical theme, create intermusical narratives with subject timelines, which obey the musical rules interlinked directly with the ekphrasis technique" and using it they solve "two main tasks: in what way the ekphrasis technique interacts with the structure of the work and what information about characters' features and the environment inhabited by them is contained in the relevant ekphrasis parts". (page 4)

The research is purposefully striving for the performance of these tasks. The first chapter "The many-faced nature of ekphrasis" consists of seven subchapters – historical-theoretical

cutoffs, in which the notions antique ekphrasis, musical ekphrasis, duration are problematized. The convincing conceptual, comparative and analytic approach demonstrates the high literary scholar culture of the DSn candidate, the adequate choice of examples of uses of ekphrasis from the Antiquity to the modern musical novel.

The striving for theoretical clarity is an important value of the research work, for instance the comparison program music – ekphrasis; the specific of the mnemonic ekphrasis; the correct discussion of the theories of senses (Loren Walt, Thomas Lennon) and of the duration (Bergson).

Chapter two “Ekphrasis as a structural element in the contemporary rock novel” with its 11 genre-analytic fragments is the most voluminous and creatively-productive one through the contributing observations on the digital revolution and the rock novel in the projections of the contemporary musical ekphrasis. It analyses as a model the novel “A Visit from the Goon Squad” by Jennifer Egan – in the intersection of digital and musical structuring, by using Egan’s personal website.

I shall reveal the research achievements and discoveries of V. Ganeva: identification of a new type of character – digital contemporary (after Agamben) through his musical partialities; genre and socio-cultural changes contingent on the transition analogue-digital music; original rationalization of the musical pauses as dialogic spaces and of the mnemonic ekphrasis substituting the narrative time; the outlining of analogue and digital constructs in novel writing (‘Great Rock and Roll Pauses’) as a new communicative strategy. The magnificent semiotic-music analysis of the text of the three songs in this chapter, focusing the researcher’s messages, is also impressive.

V. Ganeva proves with analytic refinement that Egan’s novel is a synthesis of various types of ekphrasis linked in a musical album.

Chapter three “Novel Fugue” is reviewing the peculiarities of the fugue genre explicated in Emily Dvoryanova’s novel “Passion or the Death of Alice”, yet through the structural uses of the musical ekphrasis. This problem is not analyzed in the existing literary criticism of the novel. V. Ganeva studies specific techniques: ekphrasis dialogues, writing without punctuation reminding of musical score; interpretation of separate parts as vocal monologues; sensory counterpoints; mirroring opposites.

Contributive is the comparative research of the metaphor escape in the novels of Dvoryanova, Kundera (“Immortality”), Julian Barnes (“The Noise of Time”), as an escape into the music and creation of mental pictures.

The fourth chapter “Musical ekphrasis in Smith’s novels – from tradition to experiment” researches Smith’s novels “White Teeth”, “On Beauty”, “NW”. An achievement is the analysis of the musical intertextuality in the novel “On Beauty” connecting it with Forster’s “Howards End” and other texts. The DSn candidate demonstrates preparedness and a sense to extract and interpret multitude of intertextual links in the uses of ekphrasis – artistic and musical (Mozart-Beethoven).

The summarizing message of the author is that the use of ekphrasis is “an effective artistic answer in defense of the personal space and an alternative of the oncoming digital world”. (page 187)

6. Appraisal of the publications and the personal contribution of the DSn candidate

Presented are 5 articles on the dissertation: 3 – in magazines with reference by NACID, 1 – in a collection of the International Conference with reference by NACID, and 1 – in a collection of the National Conference with reference by NACID.

In the article “Contemporary communication strategies in Jennifer Egan’s novel ‘A Visit from the Goon Squad’” the digital communication in the text is studied, predicting the changes in the verbal communication.

The articles represent key contributive moments of the research: the movement from analogue to digital communication; the idea of holographic images on the basis of neurology and of musical psychology; the semantic of the metaphor “digital desert”; the contemporary multicultural polyphony; peculiarities of the musical novel fugue.

The dissertation and its achievements are an original, personal contribution of the author.

7. Author’s summary

The author’s summary is presenting precisely and in detail the concept, the range of aspects of the research work and the results achieved. It is meeting the relevant requirements.

I fully accept the correct self-assessment of the contributions.

8. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

The dissertation is an innovative, systematic and first research in the Bulgarian literary criticism of the musical ekphrasis and duration in the modern novels of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Especially topical is the problematic juxtaposing of the analogue and digital communication in a futuristic plan.

Innovative are the achievements in the genre analyses of the rock novel and fugue novel, of the English seriocomic tradition; the conceptualization of the character contemporary.

The dissertation can be used in teaching Western European Literature, Comparative Study of Literature, Study of Genre.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation **contains** scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent original contribution to science and **meet all** requirements of the Law of Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations of the application of said law and the relevant Regulations of 'Paisii Hilendarski' UP.

The dissertation shows that the DSn candidate Vesela Atanasova Ganeva **possesses** profound theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific subject "Antique and Western European Literature: comparative study of literature", **demonstrating** values and skills of independent performance of scientific researches.

In view of the aforementioned, I give with conviction my positive evaluation of the performed research presented by the referred above dissertation paper, author's summary, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable jury to confer the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Vesela Atanasova Ganeva in higher education field 2. The Humanities, professional line 2.1. Philology, doctor's programme Antique and Western European Literature: comparative study of literature.

28.08.2024

Opinion prepared by: Prof. Kalina Grozeva Lukova, DSn

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