

OPINION

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

of dissertation paper for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in Higher education field 2. The Humanities, Professional line 2.1. Philology, doctoral program Antique and Western European literature: comparative study of literature

Author: Trayana Angelova Lateva Topic: „Representation of the 1920s in the Literature and Cinema“ Scientific adviser: Prof. Cleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, DSn 1. General Presentation of the Procedure and the PhD Candidate

I was nominated, by order No. RD-22-1567 dated 27.06.2025 of the Rector of ‘Paisii Hilendarski’ University of Plovdiv (UP) , as a member of the scientific jury for securing of procedure of defense of doctoral thesis on topic: **„Representation of the 1920s in the Literature and Cinema“** for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the Higher education field 2. The Humanities, Professional line 2.1. Philology, doctoral program **Antique and Western European literature: comparative study of literature**

Author of the dissertation paper is **Trayana Angelova Lateva** – PhD candidate studying fulltime at Department ‘History of Literature and Comparative Study of Literature, with academic adviser **Prof. Cleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, DSn**, from UP ‘Paisii Hilendarski’.

The set of materials on paper submitted by Trayana Angelova Lateva is in conformity with art. 36(1) of the Regulations on the development of the academic staff in UP and it includes the following documents: application to the Rector of UP for opening a procedure of defense of doctoral thesis; European format CV; protocol by the Department Council related to reporting the readiness for opening the procedure and with preliminary discussions of the doctoral thesis; doctoral thesis; author’s abstract; list of scientific works on the dissertation topic; copies of scientific publications; declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents.

The PhD candidate has attached 4 articles – 3 published in Web of Science, and 3 peer-reviewed journals indexed by NACID (National Centre for Information and Documentation, Bulgaria)..

Brief biographic data of the PhD candidate

Trayana Angelova Lateva graduated the master’s program “Current Bulgarian Studies” (literary scholar profile) at UP ‘Paisii Hilendarski’ in 2019. From 2020 till 2023 she was a PhD student in the doctor’s program “Antique and Western European literature: comparative study of literature” at the Philology Department of UP ‘Paisii Hilendarski’ (fulltime studies). She was leading exercises in Antique and Western European literature, she is also taking part in scientific forums and is working on a scientific project on topic “1920s – literary and cinematographic representations”.

2. Topicality of Themes

The subject matter of the dissertation is highly relevant, as the contemporary interest in the 1920s is indisputable. Numerous literary works, as well as film and television adaptations, represent the "Jazz Age" and the "Roaring Twenties." Iconic writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf, and others are being mythologized. There are public attitudes and expectations regarding parallels and repetitions between the 1920s and the 2020s.

3. Familiarity with the Subject

Trayana Lateva demonstrates excellent knowledge of the cultural-historical, literary, cinematic, and musical context, with its key themes and specific features. The portrayals of American and British 1920s are developed in a detailed and engaging way, rich in information and marked by creative analytical precision. An impressive and purposefully selected bibliography in both Bulgarian and English has been used appropriately.

4. Research Methodology

The study is interdisciplinary, combining structural-content analysis, genre analysis, and comparative analysis from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. The exploratory work is impressive, as are the analytical cross-sections of connections between literary texts, film adaptations, and musical genres.

5. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation consists of 272 pages and includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, two appendices, and a bibliography in both English and Bulgarian.

Chapter One, "*The 1920s in Literature and Film – Dominant Thematic Orientations*", is an overview that outlines the decade's dominant thematic paradigms as represented in literature and cinema—integrated war themes, the development of media and the film industry, the musical and entertainment culture, and the "Vile Bodies" generation as literary inspiration.

The American 1920s are explored as the "Roaring Twenties" and the "Jazz Age" through compelling topics such as flapper fashion and the "New Woman," the dominance of automobiles, the transition from silent to sound cinema, the "Americans in Paris" as a cultural model of that time; advertising strategies; rising crime rates.

Chapter One is of high informational and factual value – evidence of the doctoral candidate's extensive research. The analytical approach consistently moves from thematizations to their artistic realizations in literature and film. (The section on the "New Woman" as a visionary symbol of the decade and the inspired cinematic interpretation in *Midnight in Paris* stands out.)

Chapter Two, “*The American 1920s*”, focuses analytically on the novels *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and *Jazz* by Toni Morrison. Based on the themes explored, the differentiation between “old money,” “new money,” and “no money” in Fitzgerald’s novel is particularly productive and precise, as are the observations on the “false symbols of prosperity” (cars, parties, fashion, etc.).

The subchapter on musical references in *The Great Gatsby* is especially notable, with emphasis on three of the eight named songs.

The interaction between literature and music is also traced in Morrison’s *Jazz*, where the novel’s structure is carefully aligned with elements of the jazz model.

Chapter Three, “*The British 1920s*”, explores representations of the decade in five British novels: *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, and *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh; *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley; and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. The analysis emphasizes the comic-satirical tone in Waugh and Huxley, and the use of “stream of consciousness” and fragmented composition in Woolf.

Throughout the entire study, Trayana Lateva’s skill in inter-genre comparative analysis – literary work to film adaptation to musical references – clearly stands out.

The conclusion presents the dissertation’s key findings: the discrepancies between historical reality and artistic representation, and between literature (especially 20th-century works) and cinema, with its intended visual impact. American and British literature portray the 1920s in a similarly enhanced negative light.

6. Evaluation of Publications and the Author’s Contribution

Four articles are presented—one published in Web of Science and three in peer-reviewed journals indexed by NACID (National Centre for Information and Documentation, Bulgaria).

The articles reflect key contributions of the study: the interaction between literature and music is thoroughly analyzed in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* and Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* through the dissection and layering of textual and musical fragments; a nostalgic approach is discussed in Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*; the representations of the 1920s are examined within the Bulgarian context in relation to Hristo Karastoyanov’s novel *The Same Night*.

The dissertation and its findings represent original and personal contributions by the author.

7. Author’s Abstract

The dissertation abstract presents the research concept, focus, and achieved results clearly and systematically. It meets all formal requirements.

I fully accept the author’s self-assessment of the contributions.

8. Recommendations for Future Use of the Dissertation's Contributions and Results

The dissertation is a valuable interdisciplinary study of the representations of the 1920s in literature and cinema. Trayana Lateva's major academic achievements are linked to successful parallel comparative analyses – both synchronic and diachronic – of emblematic literary works from two national literatures and their film adaptations.

The dual research model is expanded to a tripartite structure through the inclusion of originally observed musical references.

The novel *Antic Hay* by Aldous Huxley, which has not been translated into Bulgarian, is interpreted in detail.

The two appendices have independent contribution value, expanding the rich factual matrix of the study.

The dissertation can be used in academic programs on Western European Literature, Comparative Literature, Genre Theory, Film Studies, and Musicology.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, applied-scientific, and practical results that constitute an original scholarly contribution, and it meets all the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (LDASRB), its Regulations, and those of 'Paisii Hilendarski, University of Plovdiv.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral candidate, Trayana Angelova Lateva, **possesses** profound theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the academic field of Ancient and Western European Literature: Comparative Literature. She demonstrates qualities and competencies necessary for conducting independent academic research.

Based on the above, I confidently give a **positive** assessment of the research presented in the reviewed dissertation, abstract, results, and contributions, and recommend that the esteemed academic committee award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Higher education field 2. The Humanities, Professional line 2.1. Philology, Doctoral Program: Ancient and Western European Literature: Comparative Literature.

22.08.2025 **Opinion prepared by:** Prof. Kalina Lukova, DSn

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