

## **REVIEW**

by Associate Professor Svetla Kirilova Cherpokova-Zaharieva, PhD, lecturer in the History of Literature and Comparative Literature Studies Department, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv,  
on the dissertation of for the awarding of scientific degree “doctor” in the field of higher education,

**Field of higher education:** 2. Humanities

**Professional field:** 2.1. Philology

**Specialty:** Classic and Western European Literature: Comparative Literature

**Doctoral candidate:** Trayana Angelova Lateva

**Topic:** The 1920s as Represented in the Cinema and Literature

**Academic advisor:** Prof. Kleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, D. Sc, PhD

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the candidate**

By order of the Rector of SU “St. Kliment Ohridski” RD – 22-1567 from 27.06.2025, I was appointed as a member of the academic jury for the awarding of scientific degree “doctor” in the field of higher education in professional field 2.1. Philology, doctoral program: Classic and Western European Literature: Comparative Literature. The author of the dissertation is Trayana Angelova Latera – regular PhD student in the History of Literature and Comparative Literature Studies Department. Her academic advisor is Prof. Kleo Stefanova Protohristova-Yambolieva, D. Sc, PhD from the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

According to the requirements, I confirm that the set of documents and materials presented by the contestant for the purposes of the competition meet all set requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Guidelines for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and all necessary documents are accounted for. Trayana Lateva has presented a thesis and four articles on the topic of the thesis. The survey to establish whether the minimal national requirements have been met shows that the documents meet all scientometric indicators for awarding the title of “doctor.”

Trayana Angelova Lateva received a BA degree in Bulgarian Philology and a MA in Contemporary Bulgarian Studies (literary profile) in the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Her doctoral thesis is a result of a full-time doctoral program in the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. As a PhD student she heads classes in Classic and Western European Literature in the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, takes part in scientific forums and international projects.

## **2. Relevance of the thesis, its core point, and understanding the methodology**

The dissertation topic fits a truly current scientific trend from the last few decades: conducting interdisciplinary studies where literature is discussed in the context of other arts. The choice of topic is original, and its execution requires a huge amount of research. This specific perspective has not been researched in this country, and we can therefore call it a contributory text. The contributions, however, are not just in shedding light on a period in a comparative way—which was done very conscientiously and intriguingly—but also in the argumentation for the reasons behind doing so. This argumentation is present as soon as the introduction: “Entering the third decade of the 21st century, as well as a reality marked by political and economic reverberations, and the unwarranted development of a new world pandemic has created an expectation according to which the 2020s are doomed to repeat certain events from a hundred years ago. There are also curiosities surrounding the general attitudes (whose authenticity is yet to be tested) surrounding the 1920s as a period of extreme optimism situated between two historical events laden with serious destabilization on many levels (The First World War, the Great Depression)” (p. 6). Later in the thesis this paralleling, despite not overtly posed for the reader, continues its trend to provide answers to the question whether this repetition is actually happening, similar to the “myth of eternal return.” I personally consider this as the meaning of literary studies – not simply ordering and analyzing facts and making conclusions, but rather using literature to search for and provide answers to questions related to why something is happening today and in a certain way. This is another thing Trayana Lateva’s thesis manages to achieve: it seeks answers to such questions with skill, expertise, and dedication to the subject at hand.

The dissertation is methodologically sound. Interdisciplinary and comparative approaches are skillfully applied. The author is familiar with modern scientific practices, and throughout the work, she builds her own research approach, tailored to the material under scrutiny.

### **3. Characterization and appraisal of the dissertation and its contributions**

The dissertation is structured into three chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, two appendixes, and bibliographical list of entries. The introduction clearly states the logic behind the study and the goals it sets for itself. The first chapter, “The 1920s in Literature and the Cinema – Dominant Thematic Guidelines,” provides a contextual display of the decade. Lateva demonstrates great understanding of the historical context and the political climate of the period, as well as the cultural movements at the time. The second chapter, “The American 1920s,” focuses on F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*. Again, the chapter shows a contextual display and a comparison with other forms of art. And just as Fitzgerald’s novel “dissects certain modes of behavior established as characteristic for the American reality in the 1920s as a direct result of existing social conditions” (p. 88), so does the author of the dissertation dissect the studied decade through the works mentioned above. The third chapter, “The British 1920s,” takes the dissertation to European territory. The focus here is on novels by Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, and Virginia Woolf, in whose works Trayana Lateva has shown interest in ever since her Bachelor’s degree.

A look at the contents, which promises a commentary on many texts from this period, may at first fool the reader that it will use a contemporary research style that makes use of fragmented writing. Comparing the appendixes with the texts under consideration gives the impression that these are the texts whose analysis the doctoral candidate uses to achieve this practically inexhaustible topic, albeit framed inside a single decade. A closer look, however, shows something completely different. The separate chapters and subchapters, and the analyzed texts are connected with a strong logical chain complemented with leitmotifs (i.e., London), so one would say that the choice of writers and texts is in no way coincidental, but rather a result of an excellent literary intuition. She uses texts that are not translated into Bulgarian (i.e. Aldous Huxley’s *Antic Hay*) and translates excerpts from the novels herself – something that might provoke Bulgarian publishers to translate these entries that are missing from the Bulgarian market.

#### **4. Appraisal of publications, abstract, and the doctoral candidate's contributions**

The four articles attached demonstrate deep understanding of the subject at hand. They are published in influential journals registered in NACID and fit the minimal national requirements. One of the publications is in Web of Science.

The abstract clearly and systematically presents the contents of the dissertation. It offers a good guide for a potential reader of the dissertation.

Overall, the dissertation is pleasant and engaging to read, it feels like it creates a plot to follow, and the plot is intriguing to readers. A personal contribution of the doctoral candidate is her research method which paints an influential decade through researching many interdisciplinary connections.

#### **5. Criticism and recommendations**

I have no critical objections. As at the preliminary discussion, I recommend that the author introduces herself with a short, but informative research that makes use of the characters from Trayana Lateva's dissertation, even if it is one of the few texts that creates parallels between Evelyn Waugh and Aldous Huxley. The research is *Anatomy of Illusion: Satirical Works by Evelyn Waugh, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell* (1992) by Tsveta Hubenova.

I also consider that it would be appropriate to separate the fictional texts from the non-fiction to create better clarity and allow the reader to observe the scale of the material in its whole.

I recommend that the text be published after fixing several insignificant technical issues (synchronizing all quotation marks according to the language requirements; correction of hyphens, dashes, and so on).

I would also ask a question whose answer I did not receive at the preliminary discussion, fully understanding that it is not directly connected to the topic of the dissertation or Trayana Lateva's capabilities. Yet the question is motivated by her own translations, which demonstrate an interest in translation. The question was, would she offer a new translation of the title of Huxley's *Antic Hay*, known in Bulgarian as "Shutovsko horo" (fool's dance)? I believe it was mentioned in *Brideshead Revisited* where the novel was described as a "rather forbidding book." The translation of Waugh's novel

is by Aglika Markova whose expertise we would never doubt, yet it was a product of 1984. Considering the needs of the 2020s, should we not change it?

## CONCLUSION

After introducing myself to the submitted material, and analyzing its value and applicable contributions, I find it reasonable to give a wholly **positive vote** for awarding Trayana Lateva with the scientific degree “doctor” in the field of higher education: 2. Humanities, professional field: 2.1. Philology, specialty: Classic and Western European Literature: Comparative Literature.

07.09.2025

Review by:

(Assoc. Prof. Svetla Kirilova, Cherpokova-Zaharieva, PhD)