

Review

by **Prof. Dr. Svetlana Stoycheva**, NATFA “Kr. Sarafov ”,
based on the materials provided by **Assistant Professor Dr. Nadezhda Stefanova Tsocheva**,
participant in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the
University of Shumen "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", higher education 2. Humanities,
professional field 2. 1. Philology (Theory and History of Literature)

Documents and materials provided by the participant in the habilitation competition announced by the University of Sofia "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski" meet the scientometric requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for its implementation.

Nadezhda Tsocheva's professional biography builds the image of an emerging scientist with a serious demand in the field of history and theory of literature: with interesting research work for the period 2017-2021. Since she was appointed "assistant" at the University of Sofia "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", she has published 15 articles in thematic collections and specialized periodicals, of which 3 were published abroad and 7 reports from national and international scientific conferences); with a rich teaching and teaching practice in the field of announced doctoral studies (theory and history of literature) and it should be noted that the seminars she leads are on all Bulgarian literature from the Liberation to the present day; participating in several research projects (including one international).

Nadezhda Tsocheva participates in the current competition with her habilitation thesis, published in the year of her application for associate professor, and with her 15 separate publications. The subject of scientific discussion in my review will be mainly the monograph "Poetics of melancholy in the context of Bulgarian modernism and postmodernism."

The theme of the work sounds modern (especially around the last century), and the approach shows the advantages (not disadvantages) of the postmodern "centrifugal" handwriting of literary studies itself. The first impression left by the work: 1. Extremely rich and interesting research material is involved - this impression does not change to the very end. 2. Initially, she respected the promise of systematic monolithic academic research, which was shaken a little by the accumulation of chapters due to the not-so-good bond between them. It seems that they were written "in pieces" (as evidenced by their appearance as articles

and reports before), which leads to a slightly strange structure of the monograph, developing as if both in prospect and in retrospect - the constant recollection of context or repetition of almost identical arguments in some chapters risks several times to return to reading from the beginning. These are light stylistic questions that are muted when the text is perceived as rather fragmentary¹.

The topic of the literary concept of melancholy is extremely fruitful, not only because of its interdisciplinary nature, but also because of the interdisciplinary approach to it. This predetermines the richness of research perspectives and something in which Nadezhda Tsocheva is undoubtedly talented: crossing them in interesting experiments on melancholy as a cultural phenomenon, as a worldview model, as poetics and uses, as psychography, in the context of the structure of feelings, as a culture of the senses, as different aesthetic experiences and manifestations, in its points of contact with other cultural phenomena ("island", "garden", "library", "calendar", "letter", "city", "photography", "album"), even in her parody "clothes."

Tracing the dynamics of the topic in Bulgarian modernism (mostly secession), avant-garde and postmodernism forms, Tsocheva's thesis on melancholy as a "thematic dominant" of the new and latest Bulgarian literature and its weight as a "basic concept in Bulgarian culture during the border periods of modernism and postmodernism" (first and second points of the reference on scientific contributions). This literary-historical plot, which tends to the history of Bulgarian modernism through a certain thematic aspect, is undoubtedly not developed in Bulgarian literary studies. However, I admit that without doubting my "lavish" literary work and private conclusions, I continue to wonder if it can really be summarized as a basic concept of the border periods of modernism and postmodernism (my arguments are debatable and certainly suggestive). (Wider discussion).

The secondary literature on which the author relies to synthesize the theory of melancholy in the first chapter was not easy to select, but I think that the best as a support is collected: V. Benjamin, Jul. Krasteva, S. Sontag, K. Johannison, J. Starobinski, R. Klibanski, E. Panofski, Fr. Sakl, M. Bienchik (Robert Burton's major 17th-century *Anatomy of Melancholy* has not been overlooked, but has been mentioned more historically). The review of the history of melancholy not only restores its genealogy, but builds the context of its specific study in Bulgarian literature, which context (especially from the XIX and XX centuries) completely crosses the possibility of the phenomenon being considered as a native.

¹ My review is based on the pre-printed version, which contains more material from the monograph and shows even better the logic of Nadezhda Tsocheva's conception.

Among the ingenious theoretical inclusions I consider Susan Sontag's book "On Photography", which offers an examination of culture through the eyes of the photographing flannel, Baudelaire's melancholic. Particularly productive is the examination of the various variations of melancholic states by Karin Johannison (melancholy, acedia, sensitivity, spleen, insomnia, fugue, nervousness, fatigue, anomie), which make it possible to later name the different faces of melancholy. The way is open, the thesis is clearly stated: "Bulgarian symbolism follows Baudelaire's *mise-en-scène* - spleen as a psychological state - a protective mask that hides despair, dressing psycho-attitude in poetic form through the image of dandy, avant-garde texts embed this image in a grotesque a synthesis of the impossibility of living in the world of civilization. "(p. 42) (by the way, the exhibition especially benefits from its clearly set goals and research intentions, as well as its concluding parts).

Naturally, the Bulgarian beginning is considered with the manifesto "Our Sorrows", conceptualizing and personalizing the face of melancholy - first in the image of the Decadent. Tsocheva shows a good orientation in the literary-historical atlas, considering the text of Dimo Kyorchev in his contextual relations with the "environment" of texts by Teodor Trayanov and Trifon Kunev in the almanac "Southern Colors". Then comes the secessionist magazine "Artist", which in this work deserves special emphasis. Naturally, the magazine requires the study of the decadent and the melancholic through the connection between the verbal and the iconic code. I especially appreciate the sub-chapter "The Melancholic Subject of the Pages of the Artist and the Secession Gardens" with the generating models of the Art Nouveau iconography of the decorative canvases of Alphonse Mucha and Gustav Klimt, the "Remembrance" of Charles Baudelaire, Albert Samen and Casimir Tetmeier the magazine and the focus on flowers and aromas in the gardens of the Bulgarian secession, extracted from texts by Yavorov, Liliev, Popdimitrov, Trayanov, Raynov.

Literary-historical weight has the subchapter "Modernism on the pages of" Artist "and" Bulgarian "- a dialogue between the serious and the funny", asking questions such as: "What is the place of parody in the transformation processes - internal or conditioned by changing historical situations?" .122) The fact that the language of Bulgarian modernism (especially the decorative one) is captured literally instantly in the humorous press deserves serious attention (by the way, it has long been proven by Simeon Yanev in "Parody in Literature", 1989). Apart from the "case" Pepo (very interesting with the parallel publication in "Artist" and "Bulgarian" and the capture of "flirting" between serious and humorous), special attention could be paid to car parodies (the figure of the parodist and car parodist) emphasizing the artistic / theatrical nature of high poetry.

The subchapter "After the shadows of the clouds, the signs, the aromas ..." adds the possibilities for analysis through the more powerful (compared to the word) semiotic code of aroma to show how feelings are ornamentalized through this code. 167) and to prove that "*Aromas and Gardens (Flowers) are the great heroes* in a number of texts of Bulgarian modernism" (p. 138). To reduce the term *Secessia* to the separation of the floral motif from the mimetic whole of the plant ("cultivation of the natural, non-naturalness, literature"), to the word from its usual contextual compatibility (p. 148), although according to Boyko Penchev, I consider reduction of the general to the private (and this is legitimate under one stipulation).

Tsocheva's work on dominant concepts, or emotional codes (called "structure of feelings"), metaphorical images, "recurring stories", the "geography" of melancholy in Yavorov, Trayanov, Kunev, Popdimitrov, Liliev, Debelyanov, Lyudmil Stoyanov, Yassenov has a direct connection with her idea of a future "Dictionary of the metaphorical language of melancholy", which, of course, could not pass without the other symbolists. I think that the research would benefit Miroslav Dachev's major research on the symbolism and semiotics of color in the poetic text, as well as Moni Almaleh on color codes in the Pentateuch. Dacha's analysis of Sirak Skitnik's illustrations to Trajan's Bulgarian Ballads would also enrich multidisciplinary analysis. I consider the connection of the "Ballads" through the illustrations with the "Native Art" movement to be a productive line for studying the change in Trayanov's aesthetics (more colloquially, for the "unraveling" of his unshakable symbolism).

The avant-garde reveals rather ironic and parody masks of melancholy in the world of cinema, commercials, machines, fashion magazines (the image of Dandy and Chavdar Mutafov's puppet hero with an interesting analysis especially of the grotesques in "Poker of Temperaments"), in connection with the revolt against the barbaric civilization (Geo Milev) and the breakthroughs of the mystical in the recurring weekday (Dalchev and the circle "Sagittarius", Svetoslav Minkov). Insomnia stands out in the structure of feelings. Of note is the analysis of "Literary and artistic letters from Germany" by G. Milev in the magazine "November" (1913-1914) as a prologue to a new type of aesthetic behavior. However, the one-sided view of Libra as "proclaiming the aesthetic principles of expressionism" is controversial (notes, p. 229). The modernist use of the calendar in G. Milev's "Expressionist Calendar for 1921" is in a creative / semiotic connection with the cycle "Seasons" by Mircho Kachulev. I admire this mention. When it comes to the presence of the Orient as the bearer of the exotic, sensual-tempting, sinful and cruel (p. 299), it would be good to emphasize the Levantine (Eastern Mediterranean) - the Levant is present in the language of Dimov's novels and is also directly related with the theme of melancholy in them.

The uses of the melancholy experience are indeed gaining new meaning in Dimitar Dimov's novels (including *The Unfinished Novel*). Here are interesting references to the use of Baudelaire's melancholy image; the association of melancholy with the "world of refuge" (in "Lieutenant Benz"), with "wandering among disturbed meanings, peering into the abyss and inaction in the face of change", with the "tragic path of man wanting to own the world and obsessed with gloomy emptiness" of this possession "(in his other novels) (p. 296); noticing the aesthetics of the montage in the way of narration and other still relevant observations on Dimov's novels.

Tsocheva finds contemporary uses of melancholy in "G. Gospodinov's texts" here she makes an in-depth study of *Sadness* as a collective and individual experience, commensurate with the image of *the flannel* and one of the variations of melancholy, *fugue* (escape); to the semiotics of collecting); in texts by G. Tsanev, G. Mishev, St. Stratiev, where he finds the thematization of the *disease* as a basic condition of a nation (in her monograph this part has remained outside (I believe that the decision was appropriate); in texts by Em. Dvoryanova ("Earthly Gardens of the Virgin"), T. Todorov (Here he considers "melancholy as a breakthrough beyond physical reality in search of fantasy personal projections" and it was good to present T. Todorov as an author, not as well known as other selected authors.) and Dimitar Dimov's "Unfinished Novel" written by Teodora Dimova (here the most interesting problem is how the author has remained true to both Dimov's narrative model and her postmodernist "signature").

In summary, I see the proposed monograph as a "dictionary" of the literary transformations of melancholy throughout Bulgarian modernism, which, however, needs to be further developed.

Conclusion: with respect to the multifaceted complex work and the successful orientation of Assistant Professor Nadezhda Tsocheva in the no less complex subject, which she studied in the course of her work, I find it more than reasonable to offer the esteemed jury her choice of academic position "Associate Professor". “.

March 29, 2022 Prof. Dr. Svetlana Stoycheva

