

## EVALUATION STATEMENT

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for the dissertation of Julian Petkov Rzsukanov  
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for obtaining an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" on the topic:  
"UTOPIC DISCOURSES IN THE NOVEL "TOBACCO" BY DIMITAR DIMOV"

### 1. Presentation of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a reference to the contributing elements of the scientific work and a list of cited literature. The total volume of the dissertation is 397 pages. The number of cited titles in Cyrillic and Latin is 208.

The subject of the research is the novel "Condemned Souls" and the two versions of "Tobacco", as well as other works of the author, which expand the discourse "Dimitar Dimov" on a metatextual level and direct the "semanticization" of the works in a new direction. Religious, artistic, political and scientific sources used by D. Dimov as codes for semanticization of utopian discourses in the considered novels of the writer are attracted.

The aim of the research is to focus the author's intention in a maximally integrated system of texts that go beyond his own work.

The task of the research is to identify the indirectly expressed textual and semantic connections, which serve as a reference for a new interpretation of the works.

The method of research is the creation of the necessary metatext from artistic and non-artistic works in order to be more accurate in the interpretation of the meaning of the studied works. Umberto Eco's concept of "aesthetic hypercoded content" is used, of the "aesthetic idiolect", which is not a single code that governs a single message, but a "code that governs a single text and therefore many messages belonging to different systems. ". Thus, the "external form" of the work can be compared with different texts, which create a specific metatext, pointing to a network of certain points of discourse, which the researcher interprets, striving to approach the author's

intention. This is exactly the purpose of the system of utopian and anti-utopian visions in the novel "Tobacco", which has its own metasemiotic content, if only because it is a kind of reflection of the novel "Condemned Souls" and other texts by Dimitar Dimov, so it works both as a referent and as a control code. "A system of correspondences is formed, which directs the semiosis in a certain direction.

## 2. Relevance and significance of the problem presented in the dissertation

Through the theme of his work "Utopian discourses in the novel" Tobacco "by D. Dimov" and its development, the author Julian Razuksanov considers the work of the writer in a new research context, which raises the issue of utopian thinking as a socio-historical, cultural, anthropological and political science phenomenon at the time of writing Tobacco and the plot of the work. The discourses of utopia and anti-utopia are designed against the background of the socio-cultural context, and are closely examined in relation to the current ideological and political systems and ideologies of liberalism, National Socialism, Marxism-Leninism and other doctrines that form the inner mood of certain characters.

The problem of the denial of individual freedom in modern societies through the pressure of formal or informal unification in the context of various types of utopianism, representing a kind of "intellectual contagion" to which the artistic discourse of Dimov's novels opposes as a warning against the impending danger to human essence. In this constant danger of "scotoma", the blinding of the destructive power of the utopian mirages that move D.-Dimov's characters, the relevance of the study is revealed, because in no historical epoch human thinking is immune, according to the current metaphor of Yu. Razuksanov, against the blindness and repression of ideological postulates that model and distort human behavior and public life and lead to some kind of totalitarianism.

## 3. Main conclusions and scientific contributions of the dissertation

In the first chapter "Utopian and anti-utopian discourses - levels of semanticization" Yu. Razuksanov dwells on the essence of utopia and anti-utopia, considering 4 types of utopian discourses: 1. Ideological; 2. Political and religious; 3. Physical and 4. Historical. To clarify his concept, the author analyzes the basic sources in illuminating the essence of utopia - "Utopia" by Thomas More, "The Ruler" by Niccolo Machiavelli, Plato's dialogue "The State". "Unlike other political utopias, communism does not remain only on an ideological level, but acquires a concrete physical form in social reality." The difference with ideological utopias is that political and religious utopias are intended for practical application. Historical utopias are triggered at certain

moments. Their characteristic features are mystification, heroism and patriotism, public ritualism, which has a strong influence on the psyche of the individual.

Clarified the characteristics of utopian thinking in its varieties, in the second chapter Yu. Razsukanov, in part 2.2. "Condemned Souls" and "Tobacco" on the Border between Utopia and Anti-Utopia "explores the dialectic between the two concepts as a continuous process, objectively taking place as a social practice and embodied in certain characters, which makes people a kind of victim in the implementation of ideas in social application.

Common features in the imposition of political and social utopias and religion are bigotry, orthodoxy, silencing the individual conscience. The dogmas are observed by the Holy Inquisition and its successors, the Party and the repressive organs of totalitarian societies. The difference is in the form and power of utopian thinking. Utopia in religious thinking is related to the ultimate control of God, and utopia under communism derives its strength from atheistic doctrine. "Bolshevik communism, especially in its Stalinist version, is the concrete manifestation of the merging of the religious with the political, which complement each other, according to another utopia that the leader promises to the believers of the party, ie. - from the church - the great future." The author rightly draws on classical analyzes of the comparison made by N. Berdyaev in his philosophical works on the Russian Revolution with its "paradoxical atheistic religiosity", turning into a political utopia.

In the novel *Condemned Souls*, the "old world" corresponds to the anti-utopia, both religious and political, related to old Spain, and the Republicans are fighting for the New. Both worlds turned out to be equally utopian, which turned the work into a kind of anti-utopia of the bright future for the Bulgarians. Ricardo Heredia from *Condemned Souls*, Boris Morev, and Lila from the novel *Tobacco*, the Aryan von Geier, are characters associated with the respective ideological systems, whether religious, cultural, or political, which are sources of pernicious utopianism. The old world is being replaced by a new one according to the principles of Christian eschatology "through the Last Judgment" through the idea of a just "people's court" or the glorious class struggle.

The evolution of a character like Boris Morev symbolizes the trajectory from personal freedom in liberal values to the power of oligarchic capital, which destroys that freedom.

In Chapter 3 "The inevitable compromise and the discursive correction of the author" the author develops his thesis the visionary power of D.-Dimov's texts. The "vaccine" he created,

especially through the edited "Tobacco", includes the main pathogenic components of the current visionary doctrines dangerous to human souls." The writer builds a network of discursive antitheses of the fundamental formulations of Marxism-Leninism materialism, dialectics, Darwinism, the theory of labor, classes and class struggle, biology, physiology, which are used ideologically and politically for propaganda and social manipulation.

In this aspect, the evolution of certain characters is important. Irina is seen as an opponent not only of communist ideology, but also of National Socialism and the liberal, capitalist utopia. Boris Morev realizes his dream of rising in society with the help of hard work and capital to reach the oligarchic model, suffocating the freedom of the individual. Varvara is another experiment of the novelist Dimov - "a combination of a brave mind and a cowardly heart", which should embody the new fighting man, but she can not control her instincts and is afraid of death. Von Geier, the noble knight, was influenced by the propaganda use of history and mythology in the National Socialist government in Germany. Stefan Kostov, chief expert of the joint-stock company "Nicotiana", is a character who embodies the decadent, modified by bourgeois altruism, which is part of the utopianism of the old world, etc.

The comparison between the "mirror", congruent final parts of "Condemned Souls" and the two variants of "Tobacco" can be considered as a contribution. In these "concluding" segments of the works, the author finds the realization of the respective visionary notions related to the utopian. Apparently the texts are almost identical and their meaning seems to be identical. It turns out that during the editing D. Dimov changed the code of semanticization and through the added image of Lila supplemented his artistic analysis of the utopian contagion of the communist ideology.

The revealed mechanism of internal transition from utopia to utopia shows a quality of Dimov's artistic text for internal subversive semanticization of utopia in all its varieties. This, as a purposeful intention of the author, is difficult to achieve in the conditions of the socio-political situation in the late 40s and early 50s, even with the explained mechanism of semiosis, built on a metatext block (according to U. Eco).

I say this to highlight another aspect of Yu. Razsukanov's research approach - his ability to discover unattracted works and to activate them in his interpretation in the chosen intertextual direction. I consider as findings the analyzes of "To Chicago and Back" as an anti-utopian work,

the comparisons with the anti-utopias of D. Orwell "1984" and "The Animal Farm", as well as the comparison with the anti-utopian story "Dog's Heart" by M. Bulgakov.

Regarding the contributions of the dissertation, I think that they are objectively presented, balanced and precisely formulated.

#### 4. Conclusion and proposal

The presented work with its depth, volume and multi-layeredness fully meets the requirements for a dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree "Doctor". This gives me the full reason to give my positive assessment for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" of Julian Petkov Razsukanov to the members of the scientific jury.

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Veliko Tarnovo