

## **Oponentský posudek na doktorskou disertační práci Tatiany Micić *Mythical Paradigms of the Avant-garde and Its Time***

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The dissertation is an important contribution to the study of the Serbian avant-garde in a broader context of Russian and partially also French movements. It focuses on the philosophical meaning of myth, mainly on its temporality, and also on its foregrounding of performative nature of language important in avant-garde experiments.

Although the thesis is, at least in some respects, a work which I hope to see published, I have a number of comments concerning its theoretical and methodological assumptions. Solving at least some of these problems will increase the standard and relevance of this remarkable work.

The first chapter dealing with the theoretical and methodological approach has a clear structuralist point of departure. However, in discussing Jakobson's paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships, the author rather one-sidedly emphasizes their horizontal dimension (pp. 5-6), while it is clear that structuralist approaches point out mainly the paradigmatic nature of myth in relation to different cultures. This is certainly true of Lévi-Strauss's theory of myth which is not even mentioned in the dissertation, although it is a direct extension of Jakobson's structuralist methodology.

The emphasis on "avant-gardes" and "heterogeneous avant-garde" (p. 10) covers up a major problem of the dissertation, the absence of broader context of modernism and modernity. What I miss in this work of considerable theoretical and interpretive ambition is a comparison with the Anglo-American trends, especially vorticism and imagism, not to mention the poetics of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

Some theoretical categories are rather unclear: this is mainly the case of "positive negation" (p. 12) where the difference from the Hegelian dialectical negation should be explained, especially because some further reflections, such as these on "entropy" and "chaos" reveal their Hegelian framework, evident in the use of such terms as *Zeitgeist*.

"Entropy" is understood rather schematically as "chaos," although it is no quality of a system but rather the measure of its possible microscopic configurations (Boltzmann, Gibbs) or the degree of the uncertainty of information (Shannon). The essentialist, Platonic understanding of entropy is explicit from the opposition of entropy to "logos" interpreted as "organization" (p. 13). The use of the term "entropy" against its scientific meaning requires substantiation. The term "law of entropy" is used rather metaphorically, while it is clear that it has a potential for the explanation of the creative use of "chaos" by avant-garde artists.

The essentialist character of the approach also appears in the comments on Nietzsche's philosophy and in the opposition between Losev and Nietzsche. To identify Platonism with paganism is rather problematic (p. 23); Nietzsche, Derrida and other philosophers point out important affinities between Platonism and Christianity.

The interpretation of myth as the "sensual" – it should rather be said *sensuous* – "understanding of spatial existence" (p. 28) underestimates the temporality of myths, especially their *recursivity* (relatedness to other myths and cultural paradigms, but also their nature of "feedback loops" recently discussed by Wolfgang Iser in the lecture *Kultur: ein emergentes Phänomen*, 2004). The understanding of space in the dissertation is rather schematic: she seems to conflate Euclidean and Newtonian space. The most important feature of traditional scientific notions of spatiality is not endlessness but emptiness and homogeneity (see e.g., Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 2004). Later on, the "sensual feeling of difference" (p. 41) appears to be a rather confused expression of this understanding of spatiality. The avant-garde use of letters and typography rather tell about the importance of "writing" and "difference" in our understanding of structures. Moreover, the approach refers to *geometrical forms* rather than sensuous figures. The specific importance of these abstract forms for the existence of the Ideas was discussed already by Plato.

Bakhtin's theory of the carnival is not based on a mere "inversion of binary opposites" (p. 58). Rather it asserts a different mythomorphic pattern based on the laughter-death relationship and on the morphology of the "grotesque body," referred to only later. This is hardly compatible with Eliade's theory of myths.

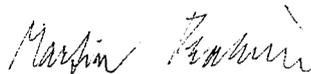
The discussion of mimesis (p. 104-105) is rather brief and limited only to some notions of the Antiquity and Eliade's reflections. For the avant-garde, it mentions just Malevich's approach. However, there is a number of later theories of mimesis, one of which, formulated by Erich Auerbach, deals with the features of avant-garde art. Also, mimesis should be contrasted with expressive theories, especially the aesthetic dichotomy of Dionysian vs. Apollonian discussed in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and elsewhere.

Mythologization of language, and dealing with it as "mimesis" denies the arbitrary character of the language sign. The "initial principle" in Khlebnikov's theory of language is difficult to relate to the structuralist distinctive feature (p. 128). While Khlebnikov stresses the essentialist meaning of the "initial principle" as the act of naming, Jakobson demonstrates the "principle of combination" and the importance of difference.

A major problem of the dissertation is the absence of a conclusion. Instead, there are some rather incongruous comments in the final subchapters (pp. 134-138) dedicated still to the analysis of Kharms or Khlebnikov. The final idea of the affinity of "the avant-garde and Indian religious thought" (p. 138) would need substantiation in another book. The non-existence of a clear summary of major conclusions is a substantial shortcoming of this work, which has considerable theoretical and interpretive ambitions.

Přes všechny tyto výhrady **doporučuji práci k obhajobě**, především pro její heuristickou hodnotu a pokus o náročný srovnávací přístup.

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