

Evaluation of the Doctoral Thesis
submitted by
Ms. Sabrina Canestrella

Ms. Sabrina Canestrella's dissertation provides a well-researched and, in many respects, original analysis of the manifestations and forms of both political and aesthetic heresies in East German and Soviet literature in the second half of the 20th century. Her methodologically controlled approach offers a convincing and coherent argumentation, which distinguishes her work as an important contribution to the field.

Sabrina Canestrella begins her investigation by theorizing that the concept of heresy offers a productive analytical approach to examining specific phenomena in DDR and Soviet literature. She examines them primarily in Vasilij Aksenov's novel *Zvezdnij bilet* (1962), Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1971), the poems and stories of Reiner Kunze, and Volker Braun's *Hinze-Kunze-Roman* (1985), highlighting with each of these works some crucial moments in the history of socialist states.

In order to understand the various forms of heresy in their historical, political and ideological contexts and to analyze their literary representation, Canestrella has adopted an interdisciplinary methodology, drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Jan Patočka, Aage A. Hansen-Löve, Walter Koschmal, Wolfgang Welsch and other scholars. The advantage of a theoretically and methodologically sound approach is that it enables the authors to provide detailed definitions of the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy, as well as the distinctions between different concepts of heresy. These issues are extensively presented and discussed in the first theoretical-methodological chapter and are crucial to the texts analysed.

In the first analytical chapter, Canestrella examines Ulrich Plenzdorf's novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and explores thereby the fundamental tension between the individual character of a "heretical" attitude and the ideal of a collective humanity. In doing so, she provides fascinating insights into the text's significance in the history of DDR literature.

The second chapter of the work is commendable for its objective evaluation of Reiner Kunze's "poetic allegories" and his "subversive" activity as a translator. The author effectively highlights the heretical substrate present in Kunze's work, emphasising the role of translation as a metaphorical displacement, transfer and cross-border de-placement from one context to another.

In the third chapter, the author examines "sensuality and socialism" in Volker Braun's *Hinze-Kunze-Roman*, with comparative excursions into Vladimir Sorokin's novel *Den' opričnika* (2006).

In our opinion, however, one question remains unanswered in this work and needs to be clarified in more detail: the peculiar position of the DDR authors (with the exception of Reiner Kunze), whose works Sabrina Canestrella examines, between conformity to the system and criticism of the regime, between consensus and dissent, between adaptation and rejection. Ulrich Plenzdorf and Volker Braun were among the official, even prize-winning authors of DDR literature. Sabrina Canestrella does not shy away from this question, but it seems to me to be rather implicit. The significance of the peculiarly permeable border and the seemingly paradoxical interference between orthodoxy and heresy (in the context of "real existing socialism"), of which the author is well aware, would first have to be fully explored.

The work also needs to be thoroughly proofread to eliminate orthographic and grammatical errors and stylistic inconsistencies, and the author will devote herself to this task in the coming weeks.

Nevertheless, Canestrella's thesis represents a very good and remarkable achievement in several respects and, in our opinion, can be submitted for external review.

27.10.2023

Marco Rispoli (Università degli Studi di Padova)



Josef Vojvodik (Univerzita Karlova – Praha)