

Stameski, T. (2017). "Modern Tendencies in the Play "Sick Dojchin" by Georgi Stalev".

Vermilion Journal, 2, 1-12.

Modern Tendencies in the Play "Sick Dojchin" by Georgi Stalev

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In the short review of Georgi Stalev's works, in "The History of Macedonian Literature of the 20th Century", Miodrag Drugovac considers that "the lyrical play "Sick Dojchin" (1971) is a text that portrays the Macedonian past through legendary suggestions. Transforming the motive about Sick Dojchin, contrary to the heroic ground of the epic poem, Stalev's play transforms into introspective discourse about the suffering of the human soul. This puts Georgi Stalev among the first authors from the contemporary Macedonian drama literature who have created modern tragedy. Especially in this context we can discuss the theoretically-terminologically and literary-aesthetical specification of these plays as modern-ones.

Keywords: Modernism, tragedy, folk tradition, Sick Dojchin, contemplative play

Modernism, like innovative logic of art, in its tendency of creating absolutely new literary forms and expressions, promotes themes and variations in the style that sometimes are perceived as a process of endless annulation of the "traditional way of writing". Driven by the cult of innovation and actuality, the modern discourses are expressed as strict correlate of individual recycling of the past. Building its own ideal and esthetic paradigms in order to overturn the traditional modes, the "new way of writing" passes into categorical imperative of art freedom. Modernist writers are experiencing the crisis of contemporary society as cultural and spiritual, thus the previous norms of seeking the original and paying attention of the cult towards individuality, are being experienced as a reaction of non homogeneity in techno-economic, political and cultural segments in the society. In order to establish an art

that will be pushed aside from the past, and which one will have sovereignty in the government with its self, the modernism equally treats all the poetic values: beginning from the form, following the style, going up to the scandal and break up. These kind of tendencies are specifically impressive in the literature, where some "huge" discrepancies occur comparing the previous literary-style forms: weakness or total loss of the privileged position to the narrator, disappearance of the linear continuity of the narration, overlapping the reality and imagism, the story is narrated by individual point of view or through subjective experience of the events by the characters. The seeking after the original consciousness and unconventionality, results into associative, mystic and metaphoric instead discursive. And the inclination for ambiguity, alternation of the meaning, multiplication in the focalization, valorization of the random, automatism, humor, puns, making the esthetical experience to be polyvalent and fluid. Into this new constellation of ideas and understandings, unconsciousness and suppressed, as elements of modern culture, become main carriers of the personalization. According to the view of Jill Lipovetsky, unconsciousness, dream, neurosis, illusion do not belong on the opposite parts, on the contrary they are gathering into the entity "constitution of the unconsciousness", which interpretation in "the first person" is impossible without a capability of associativity in the subject its self (Lipovetsky: 2011). Venko Andonovski suggesting on the modern relation: subject-object reminds us on the eternal tendency of the art towards the truth, "the task of the artist to find it even when it is in the latent condition into the object, to clean it from the ballast of the elementary and primordial and to suggest it with the new quality that can be only a function of creation, only in a kind of recreation against the reality" (Andonovski 1997:56).

In most cases the goal of the writer is to show the psychological state of the characters, to enter "deeper" into the intimacy of the soul of the heroes, to seek after the hidden, mysterious, unspoken. Because it is the only way to "justify" the value and function of the literature as mainly humanitarian, which primary aesthetical function is "deliberation of the human in the human". If, by definition the European modern literature orients towards tendency of innovation and originality, and it is experienced as a break up and new way in writing that differ from traditional poetics, some of the works in the Macedonian literacy with modern orientation show extremely unusual, it can be said paradoxical orientation towards past, sublimated in the coexistence of mythic, archetypal and folk tradition.

In the years after the World War II, this kind of tendency is especially present in contemporary Macedonian poetry (afterwards in the prose and plays) in which there is an articulation of a new, modern expression, metaphorical, but the tendency as well for an unusual hybridization of traditional and modern, national and universal. Usually this kind of appearance can be explained by reinforcement of the cultural pluralism on our ground, thus actualizing the folk tradition the continuity of the tradition is proceeded and in such way it underlines the legacy of national singularity and cultural identity. According that: archetypal, mythic, folk tradition, cultural memory, as carriers of values coherent to the truth, are becoming important topic of the aspirations of the modern dialogism and inclination towards universality in our modern literature. For these inclinations Milan Gurchinov reasonably considers that: "The folk tradition, myth and mythic approach with it, all these together present in our literature shouldn't have been connected only and only by the essence, but also with the possibility that the folk tradition and the myth should become a functional characteristic, not only decorate-illustrative characteristic of our prose literature" (Gurchinov:1999). These reflections initiate the questions of functional recodification of traditional motives and topics from our folk inheritance, that in the epoch of the modernism are interpreted differently, so they aesthetically and ideally are adopting to the new literacy reality. Aspiring the experience of the European modernism and the avant-garde flows from the first decades of the 20th century, in the period after the World War II most of the Macedonian writers in their works, creatively modify traditional topics of the oral literacy works establishing them into a dominant mark for the contemporary Macedonian literature and culture in a wider sense. In this context, indicative is a text of a play "Jane Zadrogaz" by Goran Stefanovski with intention for deconstruction of traditional folk motives. In this play Stefanovski reactivates archetypal and mythic elements of the folk tradition: through the amalgam of several folk forms (stories, songs, expressions, proverbs, wordplays etc.), he articulates composite literacy discourse for subtle correlation of existential human problems and universal dichotomy between good and evil. The appearance, on the other hand, of the drama diptych of Georgi Stalev ("Bolen Dojchin" and "Angelina") means "entrance" of the symbolical expression into the contemporary Macedonian play, and as a consequences of what these plays are perceived like a paradigmatic associative in the using of fragments from folk poems in the play "Bolen Dojchin". The quotation of folk proto text and its semantical redesigning for ideal and

aesthetical needs for a modern discourse, are especially in function and can be seen in the play "Beautiful Angelina" by Blagoja Risteski-Platnar, in which play the synthesis between folk tradition and contemporary expression of the play are consequences of the style and the content, linguistic and compositional transpositions to the archetypal ideas. All these aspects of the inter literacy of the text, according Zoran Konstantinovic are elements of the reminiscences to the oral tradition and such as they are, open the possibilities for exploring the particular aspects of the text, for what the French poststructuralists have their own point of view and consider them as an arche-text (Jenet, Kristeva, Derida, Lacan), inter-text (Kristeva), meta-text (Lotman) or para-text (Petkovska 2008:133).

From all the above mentioned discourses of the plays in the further presentation the accent is going to be put only on the play "Sick Dojchin" by Georgi Stalev and first of all because its innovative artistic development of creative recoding of folk themes and stylish variation into the discourse of the play with highly expressed orientation.

"On the mammoth horn

I hang
The sins that lay down

On the conscious shabby

And they weigh..." (Stalev 2002: 8)

In the short review of the Georgi Stalev's work, in "The History of Macedonian Literature of the 20th Century", Miodrag Drugovac considers that "the lyric play" "Sick Dojchin" (1971) is a text that actualizes the Macedonian past through legendary suggestion. According his opinion this piece of work mostly insists on conditions, than on actions, and he underlines the conclusion that, Stalev is an author that first of all "lyricizes, and he does not dramatize" (Drugovac 1990: 448). Voislav Jakoski gives his own explication of the modern tendencies in the Stalev's play, from his point of view Stalev created modern and contemporary play in a way that he "extended" the meaning from obviously old and familiar motive of the popular poem, into contemporary text for play, where the motive obtains the newer, universal meanings and values thus dispersing into the complex symbolic of cultural context. (Jakoski: 1983) In her interpretation of the complex system of signs and symbols present in the play "Sick Dojchin" by Stalev, Catherina Kuzmanova points the archetype, as main constructive modus of this play. She in the central motive of the "fall" of the hero Dojchin recognizes semantic potential of the archetypal mythic hero.

According to her reflection, Stalev creates a specific play text in which there are combination of multiple models, and their productive interlacings being experienced as archetypal-mythic picture. From the genre point of view, Kuzmanova accepts the syntagm "poetic plays" because she perceives them as a kind of "experimenting of the poetical way of articulation of the play speech", and in some of the elements of poetic expression, she recognizes the attachment with the motive and structural forms of the ritual (Kuzmanova: 2006).

Michel Pavlovski has very interesting comments, he locates the essence of Dojchin's sin into his intention "through the erotic, to reach the divinity, even more that he, in some of the variations, explicitly tells to the saints that the purpose of kissing is erotic". In this part, Pavlovski recognizes conscious intention of the hero "through the erotic relationship with the saint he wants to take over upon himself the function of the male god, he wants to confirm himself as a god, with the action that the female saints will be to him "love for loving" (Pavlovski 2004:134). Thus the curse proclaimed by the saints should deny the Dojchin's wish to reach the divinity. In that case the pronounced curse, analogous to it and the illness of Dojchin could be understood as unnecessary elements of the initial scenario, without which it is impossible to get the divinity status of the hero. And the alternative way of reaching the divinity or symbolical "new birth" of the hero can be realized only through the death, which one is going to take place after three or nine years of sickness. However the death as a special hero's characteristic in many cases can be extremely dramatic. Mircha Elijade underlines that the heroic death is the fact that affirms and declares their supreme nature. Using the fact that almost in all mythologies this kind of feature is present, for Pavlovski the performance of the feat by Dojchin against the Arab and eliminating him, has double function: first he represents an act through which the need of physical i.e. "the terrestrial" existence of the hero ceases, but at the same time it circles the last part of the initial process of promoting the neophyte through the death (Pavlovski 2004:135). Mateja Matevski the theme choice into the Stalev's play sets in correlation: the folk tradition towards folk poem and from the myth towards history. He points out that this play has in itself "less preoccupations of some specific folk and national findings and they are underlined and situated in a kind of objective historical connotation, the prime role is given to the human, to his constant desire after the beauty and happiness, and his malicious destiny that follows him in the whirlwind of a common, historical, cosmic

and metaphysical eternal fight of good and evil. Treating the motive of Sick Dojchin in his incomplete, unstatic type, Georgi Stalev gives us his way of seeing things, and thus this huge motive in our folk poetry has been enriched over the centuries (Matevski 2002: 223). Nada Petkovska further considers that Stalev in his play applies similar strategy of widening and upgrading of new ideas and relationships in the well-known events of the inter-text. According to her, "the play represents overturning of the events that are going on in the Dojchin's mind, when after his feat, waiting the death that is not coming, he yells once more all the known characters from the poem, in order to find out the answer for his conscious and consolation about the sense for his actions. Transforming the motive of Sick Dojchin, Stalev creates a play about suffering of human soul, in which he gathers a wide spectrum of ideas elaborating in such a way the values of a life, doubt in existence of them, doubt in possibility to defeat the evil (Petkovska 2008: 23). Precisely because these qualities Petkovska perceives Stalev's play as a drastic separation from the folk poem where, because of the very known fact, there isn't any space for psychology to determine of the hero character. In a very similar context Kuzmanova as well explains Dojchin's suffering as a consequence of the deliberation of his secret, inner world. According to her it comes to metaphoric dimension in which the tragic rhythm that is made of: Intention, Pathos and Consciousness represents the essence or spiritual content of the play and the solution of her content form. So, thus the paradox of the action expressed by the formula: "You know and you don't know that to act means to suffer" is the basic feeling of the moral changes that Dojchin goes through. Kuzmanova considers that phenomenon of the struggle into the play in its essence has cathartic function. In his facing with twinned-shadows the final goal is the purification of the sins through the death. However the dialogue with the ghost-shadow implies the wider metaphorical meaning, because through this discourse it should penetrate into some deeper, common human truths. Precisely because of this fact, Kuzmanova assures us, in many reflections this play has been experienced as a monologue in which center are laying the basic metaphysical questions for virtue and morality (Kuzmanova 2006: 116). In the interpretation of Sick Dojchin, Matevski very similar to Kuzmanova underlines the monologue form of thousand questions about made murders that restless and spiritual moved Dojchin asks to himself in the moments before his death. Matevski sees this piece of work as Dojchin's nightmare in his last hours of life in which he seeks for answers of his tortured soul: Did he

make the right move for justify revenge or did he murder on his own guilt? Thus through the conversation with the shadows of his victims among them the conversation with his sister Angelina as well (which is alternated in the play through the relations: sister and bellowed one, sister and woman). Nevertheless, according Matevski the friends' murders that he made, basically is motivated from Dojchin's overwhelm jealousy. In that case it comes to a subjective nature of his act (Dojchin is possessive for Angelina's love), and such as there isn't humanitarian or altruistic nature (by killing the enemies he tried save the world from the flood of universal evil). As a matter of fact the personal tragedy of the character is a consequence of enormous discrepancy between the form and the essence of his believes, actions and behavior. In those creative ideal steps of the play, Stalev radically moves from mythic, folk and historical matrix and takes a new direction into one ontological, philosophic-existential and psychologic play of the individual into the modern world that can be read as explicit modern tendency. Particularly in the last review is sublimated the whole creative virtue of the author to promote the folk proto-text as a crucial factor for establishing of the contemporary play. Although "apoetic play" "Sick Dojchin" by Stalev, it can be read as a kind of "drama proceed" to the folk poem about the same hero, nevertheless this drama text makes creative semantical redesign of the folk inter-text: first through the contextualization of several key motives, and then through their contemporary interpretation and discursive adaptation. In principle, the poetical drama is a fertile discursive ground for the contemporary presentation of the characters in the folk poetry which, through the multiple meaning of the mythic dimensions incorporated in them can be permanently actualized in the given time moment. As a matter of fact, it comes to a specific genre that invests in the atmosphere, psychology, allusions, and introspections, states of characters, and not in their actions and functions. Very alike connotative effect can be seen and it is an outcome from the drama situation in "Sick Dojchin" by Stalev, because of what for this text we can say that it is a drama for contemplation or contemplative play. Under such definition we understand drama text that invests in introspection, polyphony, multifocal etc. Apart these dominant constituents of the discourse habitual for this contemporary play, there is a presence of semantical openness that can be perceived through possibility for postulating of subjective voice of the character which is capable to make a dialog with the different codes of actual culture. Even Mikhail Bakhtin sets the possibility of creating to the most valuable and

most desirable shapes of the language art at the point when the culture loses its mythic sense of unity, and the new voice appears that insists to be heard (Leshic 2011:180). Right there, in the capability to contextualize the figures of memory and to transform into the metaphoric speech of the universal and the concrete problems of the individual either into the contemporary life we recognize the basic literary aesthetic values of these drama texts. In the drama the main subject belongs to the characters that speak and their words often have a particular ideological understanding of the world, and their own role in it as well. In that sense they are the idealists to some extent. In this direction we understand the complexness of the character of Sick Dojchin in the Stalev's plays. Represented as deeply human, in the imaginary dialogue with himself, opposite moral dilemmas and existential issues Sick Dojchin by Stalev essentially differs from the prototype from the folk poetry, which by the definition has deficiency in psychology and it is ideological authoritative. By the choice of the author to sets Sick Dojchin in the deathbed, in a condition of deep psychological crisis and terrible inner struggle, he connotes the drama space as obscure and associative. The recipient has no dilemmas that the shadows which surround the character are part of his mental projections. Dojchin in his hours of deadly nightmares gets into immanent conversation with his dead twinned, his sister Angelina and Black Arab. In that case, the complex structure of the character models especially in the psychological level, through metaphysical conversations and evocations of the past events, that in contemporary context acquires wider meaning and transmit universal messages. This "overflow" of the meaning from the text to the cultural context, the best is illustrated by the words of Georgi Stalev himself. He explains the ideal concept of his hero Sick Dojchin noting that "it comes to opposition of the word of art against one wide group or category of contra ethical, anti-moral phenomena of life, that first were transformed to characters by the folk poet, and nowadays the contemporary poet transform them into a thought with a shape of idea. That is the case also with Sick Dojchin-a kind of myth for the human greatness, but the greatness of his tragedy as well" (Stalev 1999: 194). As it can be seen, on one hand, Stalev's play represents Sick Dojchin in his heroic end. The gloriously epic past is only a fantasy in his conscious, while in the present of the drama chronotops, he is dived in the contemplative self-conversation. Although highly expressed psychology of the character, in his profile there are still traces of mythological thought and authoritative expression. The dialogues with the shadows of dead

friends are illustrative sample of this claim, because in all drama scenes the character intentionally objects to the speech of the opponent side and refuses to rationally see the difference and change. This kind of monologue approaches Dojchin close to the picture of the authoritative and stubborn character to the mythic hero. According that, his extraction in the foreplay of the drama, which affects the schedule of the rest of the characters, it can be perceived as a part of the strategy in the construction of the mythic hero as well. Nevertheless, the fact that in the play Dojchin is immobile, homebound for the bed, suggests the logic that the struggle that he leads is imaginary and fictive. In the transcendental search after the justification and sense of made sins, nevertheless the answers that Dojchin reaches out are total defeat. Particularly because of these reasons for Petkovska this work of art can be experienced as “drama of defeated man, for the impotence of the human to solve some crucial life questions, because it seems that all is put in the service of one incomprehensive logic of power movements into the world” (Petkovska: 23). Thus, on the other hand, transforming the motive about Sick Dojchin, contrary to the heroic ground of the epic poem, Stalev’s play transforms into introspective discourse about the suffering of the human soul. But, also it is a paradigm of simultaneous existence and confront of ideas about life’s values, doubt of their existence, doubt in the possibility to finally win the evil. The ironic destiny plays with Dojchin: “You cheated yourself enormously when you searched the super human in yourself!”.

In such a way, the picture of contemporary Sick Dojchin in his solitude and intimacy struggle with in self in the hours before his death, gets as well a figurative meaning of the absurd about the human size. About Niche’s superhuman that inclines with an amazing speed in front of the truth of the knowledge that, after all he is defeated by the reality. All this thoughtful-emotional and ideal assembly is incorporated in the complex construction of the contemporary Sick Dojchin who, in Stalev’s play, can be interpreted as a sublimation of gathering of the mythic impurities over a new historical person, but substitute with expressed modern tendency. With this play Stalev makes first attempts into the Macedonian lyric dramaturgy of the dream and reality, myth and legend, the past and the present. In it, the coexistence of lyrical and dramatic discourse leads to a creation of a modern existential chronotops in ideal, psychological and aesthetical sense. However, with its own explicit, anthropological-philosophical tendency this play primarily “fulfill” the human role of the art as well. Reexamining the values and criteria of the individual and collective physical and

spiritual identity, it articulates self-confidently the immanent striving towards the truth. Obviously, here it is not crucial the procedure of migrating of the motives and exploiting of the characters, but the creative transfer from the folk epic poem with mythic-hero content, into the modern drama discourse about lyric-tragic parabola for the human destiny in general, among all, it separates Georgi Stalev as an author who among the first from the contemporary Macedonian drama literature has created modern tragedy. Especially in this context we can discuss about theoretically-terminologically and literary-aesthetical specification of these plays as modern-ones.

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