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Ph.D Dissertation: Polyphony as Heresy: System critique, Resistance and Subversion in the GDR Literature

Abstract

Aim of the dissertation is to show how the concept of heresy can be considered a productive category model for the analysis of specific literary phenomena that shaped the GDR-Literature. In particular, analysing the historical and political context of the second half of the “Jahrhundert der Nacht”¹, in which the socialist ideology is now institutionalized and develops its effect in the cultural sphere, the dissertation will pinpoint the topicality of this polyphonic phenomenon, too often considered anachronistic in the contemporary word. Since the 1980s, numerous disciplines – sociology being among them – have studied the concept of heretic and introduced many possibilities for nonreligious rethinking of heresy and its enormous potential for the advancement of society. Yet, the same topic has not received the same attention in the literary field, where the most important and complete studies are still those of Walter Koschmal (1996) on the Russian contemporary literature. Having Pierre Bourdieu’s definition of “field” and following his concept of “doxa” in the dynamic heresy-orthodoxy, the research proposes a unite theory of heresy which unites aesthetic, sociology and theological-political studies on the analysis of cornerstone novels of the GDR literature: *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1972) by Ulrich Plenzdorf, *Die wunderbaren Jahren* (1976) by Reiner Kunze and *Hinze-Kunze-Roman* (1985) by Volker Braun. Each of these works represented a fundamental step in the GDR literary history. Fundamental characteristic of the thesis is the comparative approach: the fluidity of the argument and the connection between the rest of the socialist world, oblige a broader prospective. For these reasons the thesis realized a chiasmatic analysis highlighting analogies and differences with novels of the contemporary Russian literature: *Zvezdnyj bilet* (1961) by Vasilij Aksenov and *Den’ opričnika* (2006) by Vladimir Sorokin.

¹ Patočka, Jan, “Le guerre del XX secolo e il XX secolo come guerra”, in id, *Saggi eretici sulla filosofia della storia* (Kacirské eseje o filosofii déjin [1975]), Torino, Einaudi, (1981) 2008, S. 133.