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**Geography of Boredom.
On Bogomil Raynov's *Travelling in Everyday Life***

Abstract

*The aim of the paper is to present the problem of boredom in Bogomil Raynov's fourth book *Travelling in Everyday Life* (1945). The interpretation of boredom in the novel is seen as based on the idea of a mismatch between expectation and experience. The expectation of the individual turns out to be modeled by the mass commercialization of the 20th century. The "cultural industry" replaces the sublime ideas of the romantic poetics with superfluous clichés, which deny the world its unpredictability, its unexpectedness. It is these kinds of clichés that are subject of irony in Bogomil Raynov's novel – false expectations create a false feeling of boredom. Boredom as a problem has been rarely discussed either by Bulgarian authors, or by Bulgarian literary historians, therefore this paper tries not only to focus scholars' attention on it, but also to interpret it.*

Keywords: Bogomil Raynov, Bulgarian literature, boredom, irony, socialist realism, unpredictability

Travelling in Everyday Life (*Patuvane v delnika*) is Bogomil Raynov's fourth book and his first novel. It was published in 1945, in a complex political situation. The work was not spared from critical reviews, neither by the author's afterword in which he explained the different ideological circumstances during the writing process (he stated that the novel had been written before the 1944 coup d'état in Bulgaria), nor by his later literary attempts to adhere to the new ideological status quo. It was the fragmentary character of the narrative and the literary interpretation of the individual's social and existential puppetry that were not accepted – mainly because they were identified as modernist characteristics of the work, in tune with the European literary trends of the 1940s and not with the Bulgarian literature's soc-realistic methods. The reviewers, influenced by the Socialist realism, used the cliché about the insufficient "ideology" in novel's plot and character structure (Nedjalkov 1945; Karolev 1946). However, the work was not typical both for the epic novel, imposed actively after 1944, and for the Bulgarian novel tradition before 1944.

This is a provocative work which, unlike many novels published in the interwar years, does not deal with pompous nationalist plots and hyperbolized characters (known especially from the historical novels of the 1930s); it does not interpret the social crisis through the collapse of the patriarchal community (a topic that has interested the Bulgarian writers from the end of the 19th century until almost the end of the 20th century); it does not create ultimate images of the past, present and future, of the person and society. *Travelling in Everyday Life* is a book that presents the existential experience of the people from the 1940s and their unusual for Bulgarian national literature skeptical and ironical attitude towards the problematic eventfulness and the semantic deficits of modern urban everyday life. For a long time, Bulgarian critics could not or chose not to see this attitude, despite earlier modernist novels that had reproduced a similar type of discourse, including Chavdar Mutafov's *Dilettante* (*Diletant*, 1926) and Svetoslav Minkov and Konstantin Konstantinov's *A Heart in a Cardboard Box* (*Sartse v kartonena kutiya*, 1933).

Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote that the person in daily life perceives his/her reality as normal and self-evident (Berger, Lukman 1991, 33-43). Everyday consciousness does not live in a crisis, but it goes into crisis when its notion of "normality" is challenged. The main question of the novel *Travelling in Everyday Life* – "What is happiness?" – expresses in fact the doubts about the meaning of (daily) life. By questioning the meaning of their life, people start to perceive themselves as subjects "pushed" into the periphery of the world. They realize that they have been abandoned in familiar places where nothing unexpected happens and begin to experience time as a series of repetitive moments that are difficult to connect with one another. Boredom is the condition that makes everyday life recognizable through its automation and eventlessness. *Boredom is the "veil" that makes the world seem flat, one-dimensional and tautological.* In Bogomil Raynov's novel boredom has its own 'geography' that becomes visible through the encounter with many seemingly diverse, but in fact typologically alike urban spaces. The narrator tried to arrange them, to "catalogue" them, but not by their location and type, rather by the models of human behaviour that they require. Thus the city in the novel turns into a constellation of "places" that are metonymies for the people in them, and vice versa – of people who turn out to be metonymies for the places they inhabit. These "places" has no exits and connecting roads; they are metaphors for the fragmented world and for the alienation between individuals in the modern city. What was unusual for Bulgarian literature and for Bulgarian readers in the 1940s was the ironic and self-ironic stance of the narrator. The novel did not say that the ways out of everyday life lied in the pathetic, in the

exceptional or in the sublime. The irony, based on the knowledge of world's dynamic changeability, makes the idea of any completeness and monumentality look groundless. However, it makes the subtle transformations and modulations of the world visible. If boredom is an experience with similarity of the world, then irony is an experience with the striving to distinguish oneself from the similar and to see their inner disparateness. *If boredom is a sign of sinking into the recurrence and monotony of everyday life, irony is, at first, a technique to free the subject from this recurrence and tautology. Moreover, by removing the "veil" of boredom and exposing its stereotypical expectations as false, irony awakens the subject's awareness of the variability and semantic unevenness of everyday life itself. And through this knowledge – without trauma or pathos – the individuals start to understand everyday life, to seek and find their place in it.*

Folloing a brief note on the understanding of boredom in the present study, the topoi of boredom in *Travelling in Everyday Life* will be discussed. The first topos to be analyzed is the genre of the novel itself. Then the places of collective existence will be commented. They will be divided into two groups – places of entertainment and forgetfulness (cafes, pubs and streets) and places of work (offices, shops, factories, studies).

Boredom and Desynchronization of the World

Without studying the genealogy of the concept, it has to be said that boredom is often presented as experiencing various forms of desynchronization in the modern world. It can be defined as a traumatic reflection on static time, "a reaction to unfulfillable expectations of acceleration" in modernity that may lead even to clinical depression, as Hartmut Rosa put it (Rosa 2013, 16). Desynchronization is visible in the split of public and personal time, as well as in the expansion of the field of human individuality that happened in the era of Romanticism, when, according to Patricia Meyer Spacks, can be found the roots of modern boredom, "The inner life comes to be seen as consequential; therefore its inadequacies invite attention. The concept of boredom serves as all-purpose register of inadequacy." (quoted in Dalle Pezze, Salzani 2009, 14). Lars Svendsen said that boredom was an "emptiness of meaning" caused by the collision between the field of the personal and the universalizing and stereotyping potential of modern everyday life, "I believe that boredom is the result of a lack of personal meaning, and that this to a great extent is due precisely to the fact that all objects and actions come to us fully coded, while we – as the descendants of Romanticism – insist on a *personal* meaning" (Svendsen 2005, 31). Thus,

the ideology of the modern bored person turns out to be, to a large extent, romantic. Boredom appears to be a sign of the radical discrepancy between the horizon of personal expectations and the limitations of social experience. It is an evidence of the discrepancy between the ideas of the possibilities and the things that can come into existence in the present. As a result, the individual finds himself/herself abandoned in the inevitable and infinite present, without any hopes for future.

In Bogomil Raynov's novel, the interpretation of boredom is based on the idea of a mismatch between expectation and experience. However, the expectation turns out to be modeled by the mass commercialization of the 20th century. The "cultural industry" replaces the sublime ideas of the romantic poetics with superfluous clichés, which deny the world its unpredictability, its unexpectedness, i.e. take away one of the basic cores of the romantic. It is these kinds of clichés that are subject of irony in Bogomil Raynov's novel – false expectations create a false feeling of boredom. Boredom can be a tragic experience of the meaningless existence, but it can also be a simple social mask of the unprepared or commercially profaned mass reader of the 20th century –one who cannot "read" and understand everyday life.

Novel as a "Place" of Boredom

Travelling in Everyday Life parodies the genre of the novel. This is achieved through a series of gestures, some of which explicitly point to the obsolescence of novel's plots ("Today Robinson is only a dead character of an outdated book." – Raynov 1982, 5¹) and the fictional nature of literary works ("Fiction has long been in bankruptcy." – Raynov 1982, 7). To add to this, the book lacks a significant social, romantic or historical plot, there is not a clearly recognizable novel character, there is not a straightforward chronological and narrative sequence. Instead, the text relies on collage-like and cinematically presented narrative fragments, each of them highlighting the brief history of a particular social type.

There are two points of view to the genre of the novel in *Travelling in the Everyday Life* – that of the mass reader and that of the non-mass/elite reader. The novel's narrative might seem "boring" in a different way to each of them. On the one hand, seen through the "high" standards of world literature, it turns out to be boring for the mass reader because the

¹ Translation is mine – N.S.

commercialized discourse does not presuppose plots without pragmatic functions, nor does it presuppose re-reading / "re-using" of the book / the "commodity", as this discourse reduces messages to simple facts. On the other hand, the novel produced by the popular discourse is supposed to be "boring" to the elite reader due to its preconceived ideas and one-dimensional theses. These two perspectives exist side by side in the words of the narrator, who both "plays" and ironizes the expectations of the mass reader: "Indeed, fiction has long been bankrupt. Today, on its place shines the enigmatic, looking at you mysteriously behind the domino mask of the daily newspaper." (Raynov 1982, 7) Last but not least, the narrator insisted that everyday life suggested a different narrative model, moving away from the epic and monolithic nature of the novel's patterns: "As for the book, it is nothing more than a travel diary, with observations and stories, cheerful or annoying as everyday life itself." (Raynov 1982, 19)

The awareness of the metatext in Bogomil Raynov's work, the self-irony towards the possibility to write a novel about everyday urban life, not only presents a different, late modernist strategy to fiction, but also has deeper literary-historical connotations, as it summarizes (in a playful mode) the difficult path of Bulgarian literature to this genre.

A brief look at some earlier novels on everyday urban life would shed more light on this thesis. For the short story genre the literary "assimilation" of everyday life – both as themes and in structure, – was smooth and almost unnoticed. The short stories of Konstantin Konstantinov (since the mid-20s), of Dimitar Shishmanov (mostly from the 1930s), Pavel Vezhinov's and Emilian Stanev's early works (from the second half of the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s) were significant of the attempt of Bulgarian literature to compensate the reduced factual eventfulness in the text with subject's reflections, which affected both the plot and character scheme of the short stories.² However, the novel's path to the topic of everyday life was not so unhindered, because, as one can notice, in the genre of the short story, this topic was important not only for the content, but also for the compositional and structural aspect of the text. In novels of the 1930s some authors mentioned directly their difficulty in mastering the problem. In *The City is the Same (Gradat e sashtijat, 1933)* by Anna Kamenova, for example, the metafictional comments at the beginning and at the end of the book revealed the difficulty of the author:

² See more in Stoyanova 2015, 106-144.

This is not the beginning. There is no beginning and no end in life. There is no logical outcome. A series of the smallest, ordinary events outlines a person's life path. [...] But in the novel only the special, only the curious should be noted, only that which stirs the thoughts and feelings of the reader. And above all, it has to have a beginning and an end. Let's start from the beginning. (Kamenova 1933, 11)

Another example is *The Man from the Last Quarter* (*Chovekat ot krajnija kvartal*, 1931) by Pancho Mihajlov. It has a paratext note that also questions the (im)possibility to present 'life' in the form of a novel: "If on these pages, which the publisher calls a novel, there is fragmentation that is because life itself is wayword, raw, and painfully inconsistent. The author" (Mihajlov 1931, 3). In Bogomil Raynov's novel this type of "apologies" are absent, but the metafictional awareness remains active throughout the narrative, making the fragmentary nature of the text one of its most impressive traits, and turning *Travelling in Everyday Life* into a novel that "plays" (in a postmodern manner?) with the possibility a novel about modern everyday life to be written.

Raynov's novel is often described as a "reportage" one (Alipieva 2005; Borisova 2019) – the characteristics of the journalistic genre emphasize novel's polycentricity, fragmentation, factuality and credibility. Reportage techniques in the text provide an abundance of life stories, but most of all – they make the variability of stories possible. Many individual destinies are presented as "variations" of the everyday person's attempt to achieve happiness. However, behind the apparent variety of stories lies the real resemblance – many of these characters are similar in their inability to achieve satisfaction and to escape from everyday life. The multiplicity of stories in *Travelling in Everyday Life* has another function – it makes the popularization of the notion "happiness" visible:

Yes, dear reader. Happiness and happiness again is the cause of everything. Among the waterless paved deserts of everyday life, mirages tempt more powerfully with their colourful images. But how long will this stupid spiritualistic session last, how long will the images of non-existent spirits be called? A pointless question. How long will happiness be unattainable? I would ask. (Raynov 1982, 382)

Happiness seen through the eyes of the general public, accustomed to boulevard-sentimental readings and popular romantic-heroic plots, is revealed to be a deception, but it is not denied. The narrator insisted that happiness was not the result of life events and individual decisions, but rather a product of person's ability to interpret life, taking into account his/her own ordinaryness and the care for the Other / for the society:

Fortunately, there is nothing impressive and unusual in happiness, it belongs completely to everyday life. But who are we and where do we live to want extraordinary things? (Raynov 1982, 408)

I am one of the thousands travelers who bump into the concrete furrows of everyday life. One of the millions who search and who have found the answers to everyday secrets in their own way. One of those who finally feel real joy when they manage to create something, if not very original, then at least useful. (Raynov 1982, 412)

This novel stayed away from the clichéd pathetic tone of the Socialist realism of 1945 (and the inevitable attempts to fit into the ideological status quo go against the grain of the main direction and style of the work³). The skepticism in the novel, its ironic criticism, combined with the faceted view on the material poverty endue it with some characteristics of the current neorealistic trends in European art of the 1940s. The aim was not to reject everyday life, but to give a new meaning to it as one of the most authentic possibilities to approach the human being. At the same time, behind this experience one can see not so much the ideological imperatives of the years past 1944, but an echo of the early avant-garde impulse to overcome the "high" models of the classical culture. In the 1930s this impulse could be found in authors' attempt to create literary works that give "joy, usefulness, expediency", to find the person on his/her way to "life truth" – this was what the cultural critic Kiril Krastev wrote in his article "Biological View on Art" (1934):

Here comes a general, more and more complete anthropocentric order of things – and the new requirements for art are just a branch of this view of life. What matters is only what contributes to the well-being of man, what makes life more comfortable, what is useful and appropriate. Art must be appropriate to the harmonious functions of human nature. It must participate in the construction of the whole human being. Every art is a function of life and there should be no other view on it than the one, connected to life. (Krastev 2014, 99)

In Bogomil Raynov's novel, boredom is not simply a state of mind, propting the narrator deny or stigmatize the characters because of their inactive and meaningless existence (as it is, for example, in the collection of short stories *Women (Zheni)* by Andrei

³ The language and the model of the new normative poetics can be recognized in one of the final messages of the text: "But insofar as he [the traveler - my note N.S.] comes to understand that true happiness lies in the struggle for a better and fairer world, he looks like millions of comrades all over the world." (Raynov 1982, 412)

Gulyashki, 1938). Boredom is not a final point of the text, but a kind of litmus test that makes the person visible in the God-forsaken world of everyday life.

The genre of the book can also be defined as a travel diary: "As for the book, it is nothing more than a travel diary, with observations and stories, cheerful or annoying as everyday life itself." (Raynov 1982, 19). The genre of the travel diary suggests a starting and ending point of the journey, but these points cannot be found in Raynov's novel. The narrator was clearly aware that his wandering in everyday life was aimless. He played the role of an inexperienced traveler who, without a clear plan, enjoyed the variety of directions in front of him: "What could be better than the fact that our place is not indicated? So we have a choice. So we are free. Then let us go anywhere." (Raynov 1982, 66) The reader could easily recognize the figure of the flâneur – the person who seeks "home" among the crowd, the one who enthusiastically observes the changing world, living with the awareness of the flying time (Baudelaire 1995, 5-12). However, it soon becomes obvious that this comparison is not quite correct. Raynov's narrator was devoid of the typical for the flâneur reflections on the shortness of being, he neither understood the state "spleen", nor did he express a dual attitude towards the crowds –simultaneously observing them, and trying to distinguish himself from them. For him alienation was an obstacle that had to overcome, and therefore one of his goals was to find the ways to people (and humanity) in their daily ordinariness and social dramatism. However, the allusion with the flâneur can be seen as a metafictional gesture, which can be seen as a critical remark on the social disengagement in the early modernist European and Bulgarian literature. It was a critical remark on the absence of care for fellow human beings. It was also a sign of the changed literary interpretation of urban space.

On the other hand, travel diary is usually combined with an adventurous plot, based on a series of coincidences and unexpected revelations and discoveries. However, the adventurous "story" was excluded at the beginning of the book. The world turned out to be already well explored and extremely familiar. The story of one of the great literary travelers seemed to had already been read:

Modern Robinson does not roam about the seas and desert archipelagos without work. [...] At the beginning, of course, the character gets on the steamer of the competing company and because he trusted the rivalry, he suffered a shipwreck. Then came the uninhabited island. Even on the shore Robinson is greeted by cheerful posters hanging on the palm trees... (Raynov 1982, 5)

What's more, the city was overcrowded with people and things. It was an oversaturated, encapsulated space and any outer interference was an unnecessary and aggressive gesture that had to be rejected: "Because you are a foreigner, an unnecessary intruder who is going to increase the already huge number of the population with one more person." This statement suggests that every traveler, like every narrator, is a kind of conqueror and colonizer of his/her present.

Still, where can a story start from if everything that it has to tell turns out to be completely or largely known; if all the plots have become either outdated, or have already been read? The answer is – it only has to give a different perspective. The narrator and his reader in Raynov's novel were tourists not in space, but in time, not in past, but in future:

No, dear reader, we will imagine that we are savages (also a slight idea) and that we come from distant prehistoric eras. [...] Everything we see now is completely new to us. We are opening our childish eyes wide, we are looking and one by one the raw pictures of urban geography are being imprinted in our virgin pure mind. We are stepping cautiously, with the curiosity and the fear of the beast. Who can do something to us? At the first sign of danger, we will flee, to stick out the next moment our disheveled heads behind the next corner. (Raynov 1982, 62, 63)

The present, experienced as future, can be interpreted as an attempt to escape the triviality of daily life. At the same time, one can see an implicit polemic with the critics of civilization in the context of the Second World War. Last but not least, through the eyes of the savage, the characters' present can be seen as a science fiction dystopia or utopia. Is it possible to find an indirect reference to the science fiction plots of the 1930s and the early 1940s (to the works by Svetoslav Minkov, Georgi Iliev, Zdravko Srebrov, Emil Koralov) and an attempt to "disenchant" their "exciting" worlds of the future that can always be read as someone's boring present.

A projection of narrator's image was that of the scientist who, from the position of an unbiased witness, carried out his research project, "We are only coming to peek out of curiosity, we are harmless scientists and gudgeons who make their traditional trip around the world..." (Raynov 1982, 61). However, this is presented not as much as a research project in the field of geography, but in the field of psychology. Because one of scientist's goals was to understand what happens to a person when he/she had already conquered the world and had got bored. Robinson's unexplored island turned out to be the human being

itself, but it could not surprise its explorer with its uniqueness; it surprised him – paradoxically – with its resemblance.

Travelling in Everyday Life is a book that constantly changes its perspective; it is not a novel of one-sided answers, but of their multiplicity. It is not a book of the distant gaze, but of the constantly approaching to and moving away from the daily person. By no coincidence, the narrator insisted on the fact that the text was a *diary*. This suggests, on the one hand, that it has fragmentary form, and on the other, that it challenges the figure of the omniscient narrator and puts an emphasis on the personal point of view. What is more, it outlines the daily routine. Nevertheless, *Travelling in Everyday Life* is not a novel about the inner evolution towards maturity of its "author", as a main character of the text, but it is mostly a novel that leads to the maturity of the other main character – the "reader". This is a process of understanding the necessity for the daily care for the Other. That is why stories such as the one about the writer who was not interested in fame and money (Raynov 1982, 405-406), about the working single parent (Raynov 1982, 407), about the honest journalist who lost his career (Raynov 1982, 408) are those key moments that reveal the humanistic perspective of the novel. That makes the work quite different from the status quo of the historical moment and its literary images of the "collective body".

Last but not least, the novel is presented as an *advertisement* that should arouse the reader's curiosity about the author's identity:

Do you know, reader, how a new star is advertised? [...] Dear reader, I will adopt this very recipe. I want the question of my identity to remain unresolved all the time, I want you to look for my face in every random passer-by... (Raynov 1982, 7, 9)

However, the aim of the novel as an advertisement is not to "use" the reader's figure, turning it into an object of a certain commercial strategy, much less it is to turn it into a product framed by the commercialized media discourse. If advertising provokes the interest of the subject, often motivated by his/her desire to achieve some standardized image of human "uniqueness" and/or "perfection", then *Travelling in Everyday Life* is a book that uses the functions of advertising to expose human non-uniqueness and imperfection. The advertisement in Bogomil Raynov's novel is used as an empty frame, which should seal the paradoxical multiplicity of human monotony, or the variety of attempts to escape boredom through the deceptive images of "uniqueness".

The genre modulations of *Travelling in Everyday Life* are not only a late modernist play with readers' boredom from the great epic narratives, they are also a gesture that

suggests the author's understanding of the novel as a challenge that lied in front of the Bulgarian urban prose of the 1930s and 1940s. The first significant achievement in this genre, I dare say, was the book *Travelling in Everyday Life*.

Metafiction is the most essential part of this text, without which the event, character and spatial structure of the work lose their meaning. As the idea of Bogomil Raynov's novel was not to make a critical or funny list of the life failures of an unlimited number of literary characters, but to reveal the interpretive problem behind these failures; to show the state of boredom as a sign of a problem in interpretation, as a sign of a superficial reading of everyday life, predetermined by the matrices of mass culture. The question of the specificity of the places and models of human behavior which they create and change will be discussed on the following pages.

Places to be Bored. Topoi of Collective Living

The characters in daily life do not have personal names. They are deprived of personal stories and private homes. These characters are often simple social masks and as such they play the role of necessary elements of everyday life's mechanism. However, some of the characters in *Travelling in Everyday Life* have names, dramatic destinies and own homes. Despite that, their names emphasize nothing but the shrinking of the human to the one-dimensional social role or to its specific characterology. In Bogomil Raynov's work this principle can be found in the naming of the grocer – Vasil Bakalov ("bakaliya" is groceries), the intellectual – Poligraf Damaskinov (from "poligraphy" and "damaskin" – Bulgarian literary genre with religious content), the philosopher – Theo Sofov, the poet – Apotheos Gloriov, etc. At the same time, the novel is full of personal stories, but they also remain nameless – they are simply a number in the statistical diagram of the present. Homes, on the other hand, do not have symbolic value to people. Instead, one can notice the appearance of temporary "homes", such as dormitory, hotel, accommodation or the transformation of homes into work places – offices (see Raynov 1982, 238-239 et seq.).

Very important for the process of alienation is the figure of the Other. He/she is often in the role of a witness. The witness is often a narrator or a tourist who tries to forget the lack of events in his/her own life by watching other people's lives. Thus, the ironic figures of the narrator and the reader from *Travelling in Everyday Life* become two of the most authentic characters of everyday life. They turn into agents that trigger the principle of alienation in the book.

The "geography of the city" in Bogomil Raynov's novel turns out to be composed of collective topoi, some of which will be discussed below. These topoi are modeled by the experience of boredom.

Places of Entertainment and Forgetting

Travelling in Everyday Life is a kind of a 'collection' that accumulates the attempts of the urban person to escape the stereotypes of everyday life, to escape boredom. However, the novel does not merely to typologize and catalogue a certain group of characters, it outlines the changes that occur in one of the most important characters of the interwar literature and culture – that of the vital person. The individual of the 1920s and 1930s searched for different ways to overcome the dramatic disintegration of himself/herself and the world and one of this ways was the increase in his/her vitality. In the years after the First World War, people enjoyed movement – they danced and played sports; they intensified the dynamics of their naked bodies, accepting this as one of the opportunities to attest their physical presence in the world. However, this was an attempt to increase not just the vitality of one's own body, but above all – to increase the vitality of the collective body – it is no coincidence that in these years the group dance developed very intensively (see Laban 1931, 32). One of the ways of the interwar person to display their social and vital activity was through the dynamic presence of the collective body.

This, however, does not quite correspond to the experience of Bogomil Raynov's characters. Many of them looked for pleasures in life – they drank coffee or alcohol, smoked cigarettes, etc. They presented the deformed contours of the vital person of the 1920s and 1930s. One can see the replacement of the dynamized collective body with multiplicity of individuals that have non-reflexive hedonistic behaviour. The café, the pub, even the street are transformed – they are presented no longer as places for social provocation, which has repeatedly led to significant social transformations, but as places of well-hidden stagnation, of monotonous repetition, behind which stare the expressionless eyes of everyday boredom.

The café. Bulgarian literature before and after 1878 created a very lasting image of the café – it was a place not just for socialization, but also for taking part in the dramatical situations of the historical present. The person in the café was not only a customer, listener, interlocutor or reader of newspapers and communiqués, above all he/she was an adherent to the great ideas of his/her time. However, in Bogomil Raynov's novel there are few

references to this image. In the work, the café is interpreted as a place for socialization, but not so much in the context of the historical ideas of the 1940s, and much more as a way to approach to the Other, as an environment for overcoming alienation. Café in *Travelling in Everyday Life* did not form communities, but presented different communicative approaches of the person to his/her fellow man. However, all these attempts to get nearer to the "person next to you" were very often unsuccessful, i.e. the café turned into projection of the urban space which cultivated the loneliness of 20th century literature. Moreover, café often turned out to be a distorted reality, a kind of simulacrum that provided various opportunities for production of false heroic identities. They were supposed to compensate the feeling of "fading" of the subject in everyday life and to become forms to overcome boredom. These false identities were always temporary and very often they were a result of taking different types of opiates, for example tobacco: "He does not find anything wrong with smoking. It makes him more masculine, creates small pleasures for him and, in other words, if it is not the wondrous bird of happiness, at least it is a little feather from it" (Raynov 1982, 132). Another option for a temporary escape from boredom was provided by the games of chance, which turned out to be an opiate of the chimerical future: "Your life will pass quietly, like a boring Sunday, and your greatest experiences will be cinema, sleeping with a pale girlfriend or the sudden courage to get drunk! Tut, thanks! I bet everything I have on everything I want. Remember this!" (Raynov 1982, 152-153) In fact, the café got filled with different characters who temporarily and independently lived in their own utopian worlds in which they could become main characters of various romantic plots. Thus, café can be seen as a kind of heterotopia, which, however, does not provoke the self-reflection of the person. It appears to be an unreliable world in which, through various fictitious "medicines", boredom is dulled, the painful recurrence of daily life is concealed, at least for a while: "Here people come for that illegitimate child called entertainment or rest, a pale and artificial surrogate that is consumed after a really hard day." (Raynov 1982, 94)

The pub. The topos of the pub is another place for identity change. In Bogomil Raynov's novel the pub is not a place of community enthusiasm (as in some classical works of Bulgarian literature). It is not just a specific urban topos, but a model of behaviour, which is characterized by the constant desire to fictionalize life and create a heroic image for yourself. In the chapter "The Warm Wind of Alcohol" the reader can recognize a parody of one of the most famous works of Bulgarian literature – the short novel "Unkind-unloved" ("Nemili-nedragi") by Ivan Vazov. One of the characters of Vazov's work –

Strandzha – gave a speech that reminded all other characters of their mission – to liberate their homeland – and united them. In Bogomil Raynov's novel the community got disintegrated and "sank" deeply into the boredom of daily life. The behaviour of Bogomil Raynov's character Iliya can be interpreted as a parody to another emblematic text of Bulgarian national literature – "In the Tavern" ("V mehanata") by Hristo Botev:

"Don't they know?" Just give a speech, and everyone will know who you are! Well, you were born to lead the crowds, Iliya! [...]

"My people, gentlemen and ladies!" (Fortunately, there were no ladies in the restaurant, so the gentlemen's attention was immediately drawn.) I will give a speech! Quiet there! (A careless gesture to the two waiters behind the counter.) I will give a speech, let's respect each other... On behalf of my political friends... and after we have discussed the issue... Quiet there! (New gesture towards the counter.) So what did I mean? Yes, we are talking about national ideals. Why national? And why ideals? [...]

He continued his statement in the same way, only occasionally uttering the notion "ideal nationals" instead of "national ideals" and gradually moving on to more specific issues, such as sobriety. Alas, despite the young man's innate gift to lead the crowds, the customers in the restaurant soon stopped listening to him and returned to their conversations. (Raynov 1982, 122-123)

Sobriety in Iliya's speech is not presented as an opposition to drunkenness, but is itself used and discredited in the speech. The heroic model of behavior known from the years of Bulgarian National Revival is lowered. It is because the world of boredom and all those mirage escapes from it is a world that is deprived of shared values. In this way, Iliya's speech becomes a sad literalization of the metaphor "the drunkenness of a nation" (that presented the high spirit of Bulgarian nation during the April Uprising, 1876, according to Ivan Vazov's novel *Under the Yoke/ Pod igoto*).

The street. In Bulgarian interwar literature, the street is most often associated with the idea of social revolt and the rise of the masses. In *Travelling in Everyday Life* the street, as well as the café and the pub, is not interpreted in this kind of romantic or avant-guard manner. It is not a topos of crowds, but an environment of the multitude – composed of different individuals, locked in their own hopes for glory, love and happiness. "The shoeblacks, the street-vendors, the journalists, the swindlers and the pickpockets" (Raynov 1982, 65), the drunkards, the coffee or cigarette lovers, the shopkeepers, the writers and the readers – regardless of their status, on the street they all turn into marginals that are difficult to distinguish from each other or united with each other. However, they are all in a feverish

rush to happiness, trying different methods to achieve it. It can be said that these people, as Georg Simmel put it, were bored by satiety, by the changing diversity of the world, which could not satisfy their souls (Simmel 2014: 43). Despite the social message of the novel, the multiplicity of human presence in it, the overflow of so many different stories and characters inevitably rise the idea of the relativistic dimensions of the modern urban world that present the sentimental-romantic answers to the great questions of life as untrue and tautological.

Places of Work

Labour gives meaning to life thanks to the goods that are created in the present and that give image of the future. However, many places of work in *Travelling in Everyday Life* are said to be modified – they either deprive the present of goods, which makes the image of the future unstable, or provide "accumulation" of many material goods in the present, which also makes the image of the future unstable because they provoke concerns about the possibility that later they could be provided. Many of the topoi of everyday life in Bogomil Raynov's present the idea of the problematic future. There are some similarities between Bogomil Raynov's interpretation and those of other Bulgarian socialist authors such as Dimitar Polyanov, Hristo Smirnenski or Nikola Vaptsarov. However, in the context of the literature from the second half of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, the contribution of *Travelling in Everyday Life* is that it avoided generalized and hyperbolized scenes, and instead, it turned to the human individuality. Moreover, it did not create pathetic image of future, but a series of dystopian images of the present. They showed the escape from the socialist moulds, despite the fact that the characters of new times began to appear.

The list of spaces here is in accordance with the choice of the narrator. Each of the places models a certain type of attitude towards reality and is a reaction to people's boredom.

The office. It is defined as a space of security and inertia, which is why its function in relation to future is very restrictive. The office sets a model of behavior: "because often bureaucracy is not only a profession, but also a way of thinking and a view of life" (Raynov 1982, 161). It controls people's perspectives on future: "Dreams are trained and tamed, they move invariably from here to there and always within the bureaucratic hierarchy" (Raynov 1982, 161). For clerks, document becomes a fetish, and their value system turns upside down: "It turns out that the rat does not work eight hours to be free sixteen, but dreams

sixteen hours about how he will work eight." (Raynov 1982, 178) Thus, the office turns out to be a distopian image of the bureaucratic model of the modern state. And the way out of boredom is paradoxically found not in the escape from monotony, but in the volitional immersion in it as another form of fetish.

The shop. Unlike the office, the image of the shop alludes many changing events in the characters' lives. The excessive accumulation of things makes the trader fairly reflective about his/her life. He/she falls victim to his own false models of future, often presented in the language of an advertisement: "But when a person is really happy, he/she has neither time, nor desire to flirt with happiness. So such coquetry is always suspicious, especially for the trader, for whom it is a necessary element in the company's advertisement." (Raynov 1982, 201). This is a topos in which both the Self and their neighbor are simple objects of various commercial strategies. Thus, the shop in Bogomil Raynov's novel becomes a distopian image of the capitalist state. The medicine that the capitalist seeks against boredom is in the accumulation of goods and things. But it turns out to be ineffective, because boredom opens a "hole" not in the material world, but in its symbolic dimensions

The factory. The factory in the novel is presented as a prison. Like other writers and poets of the 1940s, Bogomil Raynov argues that the capitalist state had been abusing mankind's civilizational achievements. This is presented as a process that turns the human beings into machines: "Workers stood in the factory in three shifts, eight hours each. The siren signaled, some left, others took their places, and did everything with the precision with which the agitator turned the paper pulp in the steel ball." (Raynov 1982, 216) The factory is another distopian topos – of both the capitalist and the technocratic state. In the chapter "The Sirens of the Working Day", boredom turns out to be a projection of the violence against the Self – seen not as a subject, but as an object, as a machine. What distinguishes the factory itself from the spaces mentioned above is the project for future, created by the figure of the worker – according to the ideological status quo of Bulgarian literature after 1944 (and before). Here we can see the only pattern that the author of *Travelling in Everyday Life* did not try and did not manage to discredit – the one that Bulgarian critics at the time defined as soc-realist, but it was to a large extent romantic: "Happiness of the worker is in the future. It is in that coming day when the earthly goods will belong to those who created them, when machine will work for people, not against them, and when the systematic construction of the proletariat by starvation will be only a disgraceful past." (Raynov 1982, 236).

The study. The topos of the study provides an opportunity to reconsider the role of the highly educated citizen. In the most tragic time for Bulgarian intellectual elite, this novel maintained an ambiguous attitude towards this figure. On the one hand, the pseudo-intellectual is presented as a major factor in the commercialization and profanation of the intellectual product: "And if a peasant can sell his wheat, why should an intellectual not sell his work?" (Raynov 1982, 251) The boring nature of his work and its non-pragmatic value once again compromises its research and creative potential. In this aspect, the study (and the writing desk in it) presents a place that sets the limited parameters of intellectualism as a social mask. That is, the study of the intellectual becomes another dystopian image showing the decay of values in the modern state. On the other hand, the educated citizen is portrayed as a socially engaged intellectual, the parameters of whose life and work turn out to be connected: "...the brave and bright artist must not only live in an unbearable struggle, but sometimes also has to pay with his death for his rebellion against the old." (Raynov 1982, 253) Thus it is indirectly stated that liberation from boredom cannot occur only in the field of intellectual activity and fictional discourses, but that it is a part of a specific life practice.

As one can notice, the topoi of work represent not so much the ways to happiness, but the "outcomes" from the unhappiness that the individual of the 1940s was looking for. Boredom was a part of the existential experience for many of these characters, because they found the inevitable repetition of everyday life unsatisfactory. Dissatisfaction is based on the literary and social narratives that shape the view of life and of Self. These narratives present the stereotype of mass culture and form the gullibility of the mass reader who dreams to be unique and suffers from the impossibility to achieve it. Boredom is actually the "veil" that not only covers everyday life, it changes its shape. Boredom hides the material medley of daily life and its humanistic potential that includes not the great heroism to save humanity, but all those diverse, disconnected and unfinished efforts, all those gestures of empathy, which very slowly but gradually change the semantic layers of this world. This kind of interpretation of everyday life has potential and depth that presents an insight into the ordinariness, which was not common for the Bulgarian culture. The contours of this interpretation began to emerge in the mid-20s, unfolded in the 30s and died out in this form in 1945-1946.

In the first years after Socialist realism was imposed in Bulgaria, Bogomil Raynov's novel set different and unexpected directions for the development of the novel in Bulgarian

literature. Some of them are related to the ironical and cold-blooded neorealistic cross-section of everyday reality through which the specific humanistic potential of the text, freed from the trivial heroic-romantic hyperbolizations, is manifested. The specific features of the work were not appreciated by the new socialist criticism. They were condemned precisely because of their incompatibility with the "realistic" methods. However, in these critical acts one can see the great abuse and elementalization of realistic poetics, especially with regard to its avant-garde interpretation and transformation. Because Socialist realism is realistic by name only and through the replacement and overuse of the concept it manages to discredit Realism itself. And these are substitutions and abuses to which, to a greater or lesser degree, we continue to be victims even today.

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