



**Citation:**

Azmanova-Rudarska, E. (2024). The Seven Slavic Saints: Cult, modern myth and dramaturgical interpretation in Bulgarian culture (1869–1989). *Slavia Meridionalis*, 24, Article 3316. <https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.3316>

## **Elena Azmanova-Rudarska**

South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6757-9887>

# **The Seven Slavic Saints: Cult, Modern Myth and Dramaturgical Interpretation in Bulgarian Culture (1869–1989)**

The veneration of the Seven Slavic Saints originated in the Late Middle Ages and soon developed into a Slavic and Balkan cult (Бърлиева, 2003, pp. 680–682; Грашева, 2003, pp. 576–580; Стойкова, 2008, pp. 287–301). Hagiography about several of them has a long history and specifics: first, there were the vitae of the Holy Equal-to-Apostles Cyril and Methodius, followed by those of the Ohrid patrons Clement and Naum. It was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century that a shared liturgical honour was celebrated in the Berat service (1720) and the Moscopole edition (1741), which included Angelariy, Gorazd, and Sava (Бърлиева, 2003, pp. 680–682). This turned the Seven Saints into boundary characters that simultaneously represented medieval religious missions, the National Revival patriotic sentiments, and the traditional and modern thinking in Bulgarian culture of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The dramaturgi-

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Competing interests: no competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s) 2024.

cal interpretation of their characters conveys several connotations: literary, historical, socio-cultural, and ideological. Dramas reveal the elaboration of the Saints' figures, and the intense accumulation of symbols is manifested in the expressively mythological behaviour of their characters.

In the first Bulgarian literary works of the Late National Revival, the Saints' characters do not appear as a group but are gradually personalized: the earliest works reproduce the admiration for the two Equal-to-Apostles Cyril and Methodius, often together with Clement, sometimes including Naum; the remaining three, i.e., Gorazd, Angelariy and Sava, become the subject of fictional works and acquire symbolic meanings only in the period of modernism in Bulgarian literature at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The political coup of 9 September 1944 and the change of government from monarchy to socialist republic imposed ideological parameters that influenced artistic invention. Thus, during this long period, under the influence of various social, theoretical, and aesthetic platforms, the Saints' characters went through three periods of formation: National Revival patriotism and idealism (which lasted until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century); modernist transformation processes (first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), and pursuits influenced by socialist realism (second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). These determine the specific presentation, which consecutively went through several stages in medieval to modern interpretation after a phase of initial literary mythologizing, followed a span of de-heroizing, ending up with re-mythologizing of the characters.

This paper aims to study the dramaturgical interpretations of the Seven Slavic Saints in the period 1868–1989, revealing the specific literary-historical and socio-political opportunities for their formation as a modern myth in Bulgarian national thinking. The dramaturgical construction of the images is analysed in sync with the socio-cultural contexts of the times that gave rise to them. This makes it possible to trace the functioning models of these characters in literature and the grounds for their constitution as a literary episteme of all that is Bulgarian.

The Bulgarian National Revival is the result of profound processes in culture – acute interest in history being among them – thus opening a new horizon for the cult of the Seven Slavic Saints to be reconstructed from religious to secular, to be transformed into enlightenment-nationalist, and to evoke new mythological meanings. Drama being contrived through verbal forms enabled the modern myth of the Seven Slavic Saints to express the values, models, and ideology of society. Thus, during a long period in literature

(from 1868 to 1989), the Bulgarian interpretation of Bulgarian history started with the personalities and deeds of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius and their disciples. As the work *История славянобългарска* [Slav-Bulgarian History] (1762) by Paisius of Hilendar affirmed the Bulgarian heritage through a short chronicle of the Bulgarian tsars and through a patriotic description of the Bulgarian saints, among whom the author assigned a major role to the Seven Slavic Saints, it was only in the middle of the 19th century that opportunities for their artistic interpretation were opened.

Beyond doubt, the emergence of dramatic works dedicated to Cyril and Methodius and theatrical performances about them relate to anniversaries and celebrations. The Day of the Two Saints gets its foundation and inspiration from the Moscopole editions of 1742 (Колева, 2003, p. 272). The earliest evidence of the Cyrillo-Methodian celebration day in Bulgaria was in Plovdiv in 1851. The first documented celebration in honour of the Seven Slavic Saints dates from 1863 in Eski Jumaya (“Завчера”, 1863, p. 3), followed by that in Sredets in 1864 (“На 17 юлий”, 1864, p. 3). In Europe, anniversaries were commemorated in 1863 and 1869. According to G. Simeonova, precisely since 1863 “May 11<sup>th</sup> began to be cited as a celebration day of all Slavs” (Симеонова, 2015, p. 32). The *Grande Munus* encyclical of 1880, when Cyril and Methodius were canonized by the Roman Catholic Church (Колева, 2003, p. 271), played a major role in the Saints’ Day, becoming a universally Christian Commemoration Day.

Meanwhile, during the Late National Revival, the day of the Holy Brothers (May 11/24) encouraged stage performances. For several consecutive years, celebrations with a theatrical production were held, and it was essential to arrange spectacles that emoted, attracted, and motivated, thus adding a social role to the celebrations. Works by D. Voynikov were performed in front of audiences: *Райна Княгиня* [Princess Raina] (Bucharest, 1866), *Покръщение на Преславский двор* [Baptism of the Preslav Court] (Brăila, 1868 and 1869; Bolgrad, 1870) and *Велислава, българска княгиня* [Velislava, Bulgarian Princess] (Brăila, 1870).

The play “Покръщение на Преславский двор” [Baptism of the Preslav Court] (Войников, 1983) was specially written for Cyril and Methodius Day. It was the first to present the characters of the two Equal-to-Apostles in literature and on stage. Written in 1868 and performed the same year on May 11<sup>th</sup> in Brăila, Romania, the work introduced an important theme for the Bulgarian Revival by interweaving popular Revival mythology about the Bulgarian origins of the Thessalonica brothers, and Methodius as the Bulgarian Baptizer. Thus,

the notion of the dramatic genre as socially impactful, the base of the historical plot, and the religious affiliation of the characters turned out to be a necessary construct for national identification. After the Liberation, “May 11 became a celebration of the ideas of Cyril and Methodius” (Манафова, 1994, p. 116). Although the jubilees contained religious elements, students and teachers were increasingly present at anniversaries, granting them an educational aspect, and the ceremonies were transformed into cultural events. For this purpose, the celebrations were organized in the building of the National Theatre (“Народният”, 1914, p. 1 and others).

The first jubilee that took place in newly liberated Bulgaria was the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dormition of St. Methodius in 1885. It was organized in a specific socio-political situation: the division of the country into the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, along with aspirations for the inclusion of parts of Macedonia, Thrace, and Dobrudja. The Bulgarian Exarchate issued a circular in which Patriarch Cyril emphasized that the merits of the Thessaloniki brothers belong to the Bulgarians, the Slavs, and Christians in general (Патриарх Кирил, 1971, p. 58). An agenda was prepared including church services, speeches, school lessons, student performances, etc. (Патриарх Кирил, 1971, p. 58). The date was also determined: April 6 (Патриарх Кирил, 1971, p. 58). The head of state, the government, and the parliament participated (Патриарх Кирил, 1971, p. 59). As Patriarch Cyril points out, both Catholics and Orthodox steered the Commemoration Day towards an “all-Slavic tune”, but added this or that political colour within the state borders of the individual nations (Патриарх Кирил, 1971, pp. 55–57). R. Manafova states that “the celebrations passed as a day of enlightenment, literature, and Orthodoxy, as a national holiday” (Манафова, 1994, p. 121). M. Drinov’s work “Новий церковно-славянски паметник с упоменание о славянских первоучителях” [A new Ecclesiastic-Slavic monument with a mention of the Slavic early teachers] (Дринов, 1882, p. 322) was written on the occasion (although not recited at the event itself) and gave a scientific character to the celebration.

The 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dormition of St. Clement of Ohrid followed in 1916. Preparations began as early as 1915 with the setting up of the *Климентов отбор* [Klimentov team] committee at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, which issued *Упътване към българските общини* [Instructions to the Bulgarian municipalities] on how to “celebrate the great anniversary of the death of the Bulgarian proto-teacher and enlightener” and “a thousand years of Bulgarian education” (Климентовски отбор, 1915). In addition, the Klimentov team pub-

lished a short brochure *Българска прослава на хилядо години от смъртта на св. Климент Охридски и на хилядо години българска просвета* [Bulgarian celebration of one thousand years since the death of St. Clement of Ohrid and one thousand years of Bulgarian enlightenment] (Теодоров-Балан, 1914), which emphasized the idea of making donations to build a monument and set up an exhibition. These diverse activities took the commemoration day away from its academic meaning and paved the way to establishing a new cult of the saint. Thus, the jubilee of St. Clement in 1916 turned out to be most spectacular.

Thanks to the widely popularized activities, tributes were held in many places in the country, and literary works dedicated to St. Clement were written. The embraced solemn tone persisted in the annual celebrations and festive activities. These celebrations bring the image of St. Clement closer to the students and the younger generation. They become a suitable audience to perceive the message of the saints' images, refunctioning them into a model for further affirmation of the entire group of saints through the school, the university, and the theatre, which leads to their increased inclusion in Bulgarian reading-books,<sup>1</sup> anthologies and textbooks, as well as stage interpretations. Evidence can be found in an organized "students' party": the Municipal Gazette "Veliko Tarnovo" of April 30, 1931, published an announcement about a student stage performance of the play "The Bells of St. Clement" by Dimo Syarov (В. Даскалов, 1931, pp. 29–30).

However, for the entire period from the Liberation to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the only dramaturgical work directly dedicated to the cult of the enlighteners was "Свети Седмочисленици" [Sveti Sedmochiselnitsi] (Христов, 1944), by Kiril Hristov. This dramatic ballad was published in 1941 and was awarded by the Ministry of Education. This work had a phenomenal source: the fresco of the Seven Slavic Saints in the monastery St. Naum of Ohrid, dating from 1806. Thus, the dramaturgical fabric became a secondary myth because it connected "images, fables, and literary forms" in a mythological whole (Богданов, 2006, p. 6). The frescoes in St. Naum monastery activated identification mechanisms from image to word. This fresco compensated for the national structuring and social integration through the pathetic praise of the imagined memory because it reflected "the functionality of the mythical way of solving collective problems" (Богданов, 2006, p. 32).

---

<sup>1</sup> In the present study, "reading-books" refers to the earliest forms of textbooks (*читанки*) used in Bulgaria to start reading in 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

The first scene of “Свети Седмочисленици“ shows the frescos in St. Naum monastery. Stepping out from the frescos, the characters come to life in the following order: Naum, Clement, Cyril, Methodius, Gorazd, and Sava (Христов, 1944, p. 7). There is also Prince Boris with several of his boyars. The dialogues are tense and are conducted over the sounds of thunder and startling bolts of lightning. The first lines reveal the fate of the Seven Slavic Saints: the death of Cyril, the death of Methodius, and the arrival of Clement, Naum, and Angelariy in Bulgaria, while other disciples have been sold into slavery... The characters substantiate the idea of national identity: Cyril and Methodius perceive themselves as Slavs and Bulgarians, Prince Boris is the strategist statesman, while Clement and Naum are identified by their literary schools. The ending is upbeat and introduces the idea that the dismal blindness of slavery remains in the past, and freedom of speech is setting in.

The lack of in-depth historical research deprived literature of artistic inventions until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when – following intensified scientific and archaeological research on the Bulgarian Middle Ages – several newly discovered manuscripts were published, previously unknown information was made public, and data was searched for in foreign libraries and archives (Vienna, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Paris, Warsaw, Krakow, Kyiv, Moscow, etc.). Combined with the nationalist sentiments in the country, these facts began to construct a new type of mythologems in Bulgarian society, part of which is related to the alphabet and the beginnings of the Bulgarian written word.

Thus, in the artistic works of this period, the theme of the church and the educational activity of the Seven Slavic Saints in the creation and spread of the Slavic alphabet is refracted through several story-generating ideas: the establishment of Christianity as the official religion in Bulgaria, the reign of Prince Boris I, the creation of the Slavic alphabet, the reception of the Cyrillo-Methodian disciples after they were expelled from Moravia, the organization of literary schools in Pliska, Preslav and Ohrid, and the rule of Tsar Simeon.

The first Bulgarian modernist drama dedicated to the affirmation of Tsar Simeon as a ruler was “Имало едно време“ [Once Upon a Time] (Райнов, 1923) by N. Raynov. Defining it as a “tale” implies an ancient primary source and medieval oral legends. The drama time is 892 – a year before the ascension of Simeon and shortly before the period of the “Golden Age”. Prince Boris, who has retired from the throne to become a monk, is provoked by the paganism of his eldest son, Prince Vladimir, and leaves the monastery. He dethrones Vladimir, blinds him, and installs Simeon in his place. The main characters

are the rulers of Bulgaria: Vladimir, Boris, Simeon, also Presbyter Clement, and Chernorizets – a monk wearing a black robe.

Secondary characters are boyars, guards, monks, witches, and maidens. The only image in the drama related to the cult of the Seven Slavic Saints is that of Clement – here he is in the role of a Presbyter. The deep tragedy of the work is based on the fact that only at the end, when it is too late, do Boris and Vladimir understand that neither of them are guilty. Boris is not responsible for the slaughtered boyars, nor is Vladimir for the pagan rebellion. The character of Presbyter Clement is shown as a wise clergyman guiding Prince Boris. The “tale” ends tragically with the blinding of Vladimir by the Chernorizets and Boris’s deep pain that he is the cause of the evil that befalls his son. Still, the great tragedy of father and son originates victory over sin (Vladimir pardons everyone: the rebellious boyars, his angry father, even his blinder – the Chernorizets in the black robe), and Boris realizes the power of forgiveness and mercy.

Another work dedicated to the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tsar Simeon is a drama of the same name written by Stefan L. Kostov. The author uses the modern myth of Chernorizets Hrabar as a pseudonym for Tsar Simeon. It is explicitly specified that “the action takes place in 893”. One of the main characters is St. Naum, who, like N. Raynov’s St. Clement, is subject to the royal will. Simeon also turns out to be spiritually the stronger one, this being emphasized through his role as a man-of-letters under the pseudonym of Chernorizets Hrabar, and the fact that he (Simeon) becomes the ruler only after going through many trials of the spirit.

The works under review outline the thematic range of the motif. After the Liberation, dramas continue to present only some of the characters of the Seven Slavic Saints and have a marked jubilee timeline: the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dormition of St. Methodius (1885), the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dormition of St. Clement (1916), the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Golden Age” (1927), etc. These characters are created along several well-established patterns: an emphasis on their nationality; inclusion of a ruler figure as a supporter of their activity, and strong symbolic importance of the literary territory (Ohrid, Preslav, Constantinople, Rome, Venice). They often act as advisers, assistants, diplomats and therefore appear to be mediators between the world of the initiated and that of the ordinary people: between the rulers and the people, between knowledge and illiteracy. This helps to actively mythologize the characters, and the mechanisms of this process are classical:

“one element is selected, hypertrophied and a new reality is built with new cause-and-effect relationships” (Найденева, 2017, p. 6).

The events of September 9, 1944, changed not only the political but also the cultural map of Bulgaria. The newly introduced method of socialist realism was proclaimed as the only correct one and the subsequent party censorship sharply modified the themes, motifs, and even the concepts of history and historical writing. This had an impact on the make-up of anniversary celebrations, which, among other things, also fulfilled the role of “ceremonial communication” and the anniversary now “offers a new cultural meaning as a mediator in the transmission of the political revision of the historical narrative” (Джевиецка, 2020, p. 37). Bulgarian drama for about 20 years after the September 9 coup was orientated towards totally different thematic and stylistic layers – the motif of the victorious socialist revolution became in vogue. Only after the infamous April 1956 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, in October of that year, was the state of modern Bulgarian drama discussed in the Playwriters Department at the Bulgarian Writers Union in terms of both the communication of the literary heritage and the deficiencies in the creative efforts seen after 1944. The ideological foundations of presenting the past were also considered, including the Middle Ages and their interpretation. Bulgarian drama of this period was marked by artistic limitations caused by the elimination of basic markers that had existed before 1944, especially those that through the “principles of aesthetic syncretism” had revealed “self-knowledge of the Self, the existential loneliness and tragedy of the doomed eternal search of the restless and inquisitive human spirit” (Иванова-Гиргинова & Рускова, 2021, p. 222). The new party and cultural elites faced a great challenge in the interpretation of the religious aspects, entailing different interpretations of all the canonized figures, including Cyril, Methodius, and their disciples.

During the period 1945–1990, several anniversaries were organized, three of which (in 1963, 1966, and 1969) presented research and fiction works of varied quality. The first major anniversary in the conditions of the new social ideology was the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Slavic alphabet, celebrated in 1963. An expansive article in “Литературен фронт” [“Literature Front”] newspaper emphasized the national affiliation and national identification of the celebration: “The Day of the Bulgarian Alphabet, of the Bulgarian book, of Bulgarian literature, of the Bulgarian press, of Bulgarian education and Bulgarian schools...” (“1100 години”, 1963, p. 1). The awarding of “titles to representa-

tives of science, education, literature, and the arts” (“1100 години”, 1963, p. 1) emphasized the political and educational nature of the celebration. The first scientific anthology was set up, more fiction books were published, and two dramaturgical works, by N. Dragova and P. Stefanov and by Slav H. Karaslavov, were created especially on the occasion.

In 1966, the 1050<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dormition of St. Clement of Ohrid was celebrated. The festivities lasted a whole week. In the press, St. Clement was described as “a teacher and man of letters, a writer-patriot, a public figure, a statesman” (Диневков, 1966, p. 1); in the opening speech of the scientific session, Academician V. Georgiev emphasized the “national” and “social” significance of this saint. Clement is “a great figure”, “a people’s apostle”, “takes a high place in public life”, who “stays among the people”, “a begetter” and “a fighter” (Георгиев, 1968, pp. 17–18). These quotes reveal the mechanisms of ideologization through socialist realism: embracing and mastering the reading and interpretation of characters and events not only of the recent past but also those of far back in time – of the Bulgarian Middle Ages. They validate the coercion over language and speech in such a way that they effect a change in the perception of the Cyrillo-Methodian characters, which R. Daskalov relates precisely to the 1960s (Р. Даскалов, 2018, p. 469).

During the years of the socialist regime, spiritual and religious were completely replaced by political and ideology-oriented. This is a testimony to the overrating – the overexposure – of the idea of the teaching function (be it educational or enlightening) at the expense of the public, the social function. Thus, the enlightened became thoroughly educational, the religious was transformed into only spiritual, and the national was ideologized and used politically. The secularization of the concept of “enlightenment” (Джевицка, 2018, p. 81) led to the secularization of the spiritual and its transformation into moral (rather than religious), as well as the national into Bulgarian (rather than Greek), i.e., recognition of functionality rather than of the innate. It was political use that in turn secularized the figures and rationalized them. The encounter between, on the one hand, the religious, spiritual, and enlightened perspectives and, on the other hand, the ideological, rational, and moral remythologized the perception of the saints, reforming, and re-functioning their work. Thus arose the secondary mythology of the saints that brought enlightenment.

Considering the pieces written for the stage, the tendency to connect their themes to the past was seen in them too. Socialist ideological thought started

letting in various genre forms. There were dramas and plays, others belonged to the narrative genres partially or were completely adapted for the stage (Azmanova-Rudarska, 2020). Dramas, plays, and scripts appeared, “Корато светлината се раждаше” [When the Light Was Born] by Slav H. Karaslavov and “Единадесетата заповед” [The Eleventh Commandment] co-authored by N. Dragova and P. Stefanov being among the first, in 1963. These two dramas competed for the “on-time championship”, being written on the eve of the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Slavic alphabet. Both were reissued in 1968 on another anniversary: 1100 years since the consecration of the Slavic alphabet and Cyrillic books by the Roman Pope Adrian II.

The play “Единадесетата заповед” presents the activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciples in Moravia Magna from 867 to 885; it begins with the conversion of the Moravian people and ends with the death of Methodius and Clement’s decision to leave for Bulgaria. Shown are the efforts to spread the Slavic alphabet, the confrontation of the German clergy against the mission of the Thessalonica Brothers in Moravia, and the dispute with the trilinguists in Venice is the certain culmination of the work. The finale of the drama is also the resolution of the story – at the deathbed of Methodius. The epilogue sets the essence brought out through the aspiration to preserve the Slavic alphabet in Bulgaria, represented by the desire of Clement and his followers to go to “Mother Bulgaria” (Драгова & Стефанов, 1963, p. 72).

The drama action is tense, full of events and twists with many smaller incidents interwoven in them. The character system is richly and intricately built, with each character well thought out and having a specific function.

Untraditional and outside the socialist realism canon is the character of Budimir, a pagan priest and folk bard whose image puts to test the Christian philosophy of the Western and the Eastern Churches, but also the compassion, mercy and wisdom of Cyril and Methodius, creators of the Slavic alphabet. Budimir “illuminates” the crossroads in the drama, where a great cultural clash takes place between the new, epitomized by the Slavic proto-teachers, and the old, whose carriers are the German clergy. Following the example of ancient Greek tragedy, choruses make the narrative sound more enigmatic, mystical, and ritualistic. By applying different dramaturgical approaches, methods of presentation, and religious and philosophical concepts, the work moves from one dramaturgical register to another – from a historical to a mysterious vision and philosophical treatise that reaches the dimensions of a psychological drama about the times, political morals, and archetypal human values.

In 1968, the success of the Slavic mission in Rome was celebrated: the recognition of the Cyril-Methodian work by the Pope. On this occasion, several earlier published works were promoted. This was the case not only with “Единадесетата заповед” by N. Dragova and P. Stefanov, but also with Slav Hr. Karaslavov’s drama in verse “Братята от Солун” [The Brothers from Thessalonica]. In contrast to the play “Единадесетата заповед”, Karaslavov’s play *Братята от Солун* [The Brothers from Thessalonika] steadfastly and unequivocally adhered to the canon of socialist realism, thus lacking in the power of impact and overtones. It is written in verse and is based on two events of crucial importance: the creation of the Slavic alphabet and its defence in Venice in the dispute with the followers with the so called trilingual heresy. The plot contains numerous controversial hypotheses (including many actions that cannot be put to proof, while others contradict the historical logic of the medieval era), which seem to be piled up quite deliberately to permanently deform the characters. This series of deliberate alterations of historical reality ultimately undermines the overall plot. Gorazd is presented as a Slav who has lived and become literate in Byzantium, while Sava, being enchanted by the philosopher’s mind, eloquence, and wisdom, is a voluntary follower of Constantine in his mission to the Arab Caliphate. All the foreign characters turn out to be selfish, mischievous, and treacherous people.

In the 1970s, drama managed to loosen the knot of socialist censorship and manifest itself in more non-traditional and postmodern forms, such as the play in verse “Битка за Преслав” [Battle for Preslav] by R. Radkov (written in 1970, performed by the TV theater in 1971). Radkov is also the author of the ritual drama in verse “Похвално слово за словото” [Praise to the Word], performed in 1978 in the crypt of St. Alexander Nevsky Patriarchal Cathedral, and in the Vatican in 1985 in the presence of Pope John Paul II. The 1980s were marked by two works dedicated to characters of the Seven Slavic Saints and their mission: the play “Притча за Философа” [Apologue about the Philosopher] by K. Topalov in 1980, and the script “Философът” [The Philosopher] by N. Rusev in 1982.

K. Topalov’s play “Притча за Философа” [Apologue about the Philosopher] (Топалов, 1981) is a modern reminiscence of the medieval theme. The work has a profound philosophical layer, despite the spare character structure. The main characters are the Philosopher, Methodius (he is also the Chronicler), the Pope, and the Patriarch, and they all are psychologically credible. Time and place of action: 869, Rome. The dramaturgical narrative is centred around the conse-

creation of the Slavic alphabet. The dramaturgical action does not aim to fully reveal the characters but to highlight their particularity and uniqueness. For example, contrary to expectations, Cyril is abrupt and uncompromising, but his behaviour is dramaturgically justified by the fact that he is the centre figure. Methodius is the Chronicler – he gives an acceptable form to everything spoken by the Philosopher and records his activities for history. However, the play also contains references to modern times and the ideological machine of socialism; on a deeper level there are references to the substitution of values, the pretence of morality, and the narrow worldview. Thus, seemingly representing a medieval event, the play reveals the shortcomings of modern ideological governance. The text abounds in fragments of popular medieval works (the hagiography of Cyril and Methodius, *Проглас към Евангелието* [Foreword to the Gospel], etc.), and they perform different functions – from purely informative through emotional – to counterpoint to what is shown on stage.

The novel and screenplay “Философът” [The Philosopher] (1982) by N. Rusev is a kind of dreamlike account of Constantine’s early years. Supernaturally, it reveals the extraordinary abilities of this Philosopher from the age of 7 to the moment he reunites with Methodius in the Polychron monastery. The organizing function of the action relies not so much on concrete events as on the vicissitudes of the character and the penetrating psychological experiences they generate. The search for the lost brother Methodius becomes a search for spirit, growth, and maturation. Thus, finding him coincides with spiritual insight and reassurance. In the book, the Seven Slavic Saints gather only at the end – Naum being with Constantine all the time – and Methodius meets them at the doors of Polychron surrounded by Clement, Sava, and Angelariy. Gorazd is missing, which is substantiated by historical and biographical information. The novel is divided into four parts; like the four Gospels, it reveals the four stages of Constantine’s life. The “Wooden Chalice” is the first part, the “Silver Chalice” is the second, the “Golden Chalice” follows, and finally comes the “Handful”. The symbolism of the three ritual objects is woven into the specifics of the dramaturgical action: the wooden chalice is the chalice of pledge, the silver chalice is the source of wisdom, the golden chalice is the vessel of poison, and the handful is a sign of the fraternal handshake, stronger than collusion.

Thus, the chalice symbolizes communion but also initiation; it marks the various stages of the character’s transformation. The fraternal handshake represents the moment of joining and belonging to a community. In this is evident the in-

fluence of L. Zhivkova and her concepts of interweaving the secret, the mystical, and the esoteric (Nazarska, 2022, p. 131) symbolic aspects on the terrain of literature. The repercussions of the long-prepared celebrations of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bulgarian state are discernible, as some of them brought the revival and renewal of traditional and non-traditional religious beliefs and pivotal plots of the Bulgarian Middle Ages. “An integral part of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary are the initiatives to celebrate Constantine the Philosopher, thus maintaining the national programme of the comprehensively and harmoniously developed personality”, noted Emil Petrov in his speech at the infamous “April Literary Discussion ‘81”, referring to N. Rusev’s scenario (Петров, 1981, p. 7). Hence, the figure of Constantine-Cyril was laid in the substratum of socialist realism. The seemingly realistic text is highly fragmented and disconnected, with plot synopses, between which many fantastic, mythological, and mystical elements are inserted. In “The Philosopher”, N. Rusev toys with impressions of reality and dream, illusion and truth, proven fact and fiction, proximity and the aloofness of characters (as to the archetype, the reader, the epoch). This innovation in dramaturgical depiction, which was also applied by R. Radkov and M. Minkov, elevated dramaturgical searches in Bulgarian literature to postmodernist positions as early as the beginning of the 1980s. The fact that these texts were difficult to find reinforced the modern myth of the disappearing (silent) and the emerging (spoken) ritual word. The oral accounts of the two emblematic performances of Radko Radkov’s ritual drama in verse “Похвално слово за словото” [Praise to the Word] by the “Old Theatre” in the crypt of St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in 1978 and in the Vatican in 1985 created a new mythological image of modern Bulgarian drama as modernized, having overcome the stereotypes of totalitarian thought, and having mastered new dramaturgical models that relieved it from the tutelage of ideology. The uncertainty of their dramaturgical realization is a sign of the incompleteness of the mythologizing processes leading to continuous changes, replacements, and insertions of constructivist and de-constructivist models. It is the deconstruction of the canon that influences their placement in the cultural layers of Bulgarian literature.

Descriptive analysis of the dramas associated with figures of the Seven Slavic Saints displays how the dramaturgical characters act through their collective entity, although they are not merged in a fully homogeneous secular complex. They seem identical to each other through the extrapolation of the miracle, which in this case is the Slavic alphabet – an analogy of the written and spoken word. All the Seven Saints master this secret; they indicate each other;

their psychological characteristics often change and exchange. In different dramaturgical texts, the same binary models are detected: the rebel and the humble, the initiated and the profane, the intellectual and the worker, the teacher and the follower. This duality corresponds to their historical fabric and the metaphorically recreated gesture of the creator. Their ambivalence entails instability, implying that the character's change will unfold in sequence and evolution. But the created abstractness in the dramas of R. Radkov and M. Minkov "erases the temporal distance" (ЖЕНЕТ, 2001, p. 23). Thus, the paradoxical time and space express the conditionality of the images and become a kind of counterpoint from which the overturning of the dramatization process redirects inward regarding the individual and centripetal regarding the community. Here the secondary mythological layer starts to be built, where the images are palimpsestically layered; the word thickens the "rhetoric of the figures" and becomes a "code of literary connotations" (ЖЕНЕТ, 2001, p. 116). The characters of the Seven Slavic Saints in Bulgarian drama are often created with an instructive (anniversary, ideological) and educational (national, pedagogical) purpose. The liturgies and the hagiographies of Cyril, Methodius, Clement, Naum, or the others of the Seven Saints are the major plot engines. Thus, text and metatext create a macro text suggesting, in B. Anderson's words, "new ideas of simultaneity" (Anderson, 2006, p. 37). It is this macro text that serves as the primary basis for building the modern myth of the saints enlighteners as first creators/ teachers of the nation (АРЕТОВ, 2001, pp. 5–53; П. Даскалов, 2018, pp. 468–475). In the drama fabric, which is full of social messages and political exaltations, different ideologies act as a kind of time continuum, limited and localized, but with the characteristics of sacred times, in which the meanings of the figures are re-postulated or re-composed. Thus, the characters become a bridge between the text fragments, in which the appropriation of a character by various social groups "demonstrates how boundaries within the framework of the nation are negotiated around accepted national symbols" (Todorova, 2009, p. xiv) and turn "into elite struggles over who owns history" (Todorova, 2009, p. 183). No matter to what literal extent one uses R. Barthe's idea about the difference between image and writing (and, considering the Seven Slavic Saints, "writing" is simultaneously a metaphor and a history phenomenon), the figures of the Cyril-Methodian disciples in drama give rise to a peculiar identity bimodality: social identity and cultural identity. The stage presentation of the literary work renders self-identification to the individual through the sense of belonging to a particular community.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1100 години славянска азбука и българска писменост. (1963, May 24). *Литературен фронт*, 19(21).
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. VERSO.
- Nazarska, G. (2022). The Nazirites spiritual community in Bulgaria (1950s–1980s). *Балканистичен форум*, 31(2), 120–136. <https://doi.org/10.37708/bf.swu.v31i2.7>
- Todorova, M. (2009). *Bones of contention: The living archive of Vasil Levski and the making of Bulgaria's national hero*. Central European University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9786155211638>
- Азманова-Рударска, Е. (2020). Наука и празничност: Култ и идеологизация към образите на св. Кирил и св. Методий и някои от техните ученици в някои страни от Черноморския регион в периода 1945–1990 г. *Балканистичен форум*, 29(3), 236–249. <https://doi.org/10.37708/bf.swu.v29i3.12>
- Аретов, Н. (2001). *Балкански идентичности в българската култура от модерната епоха (XIX–XX в.)*. Институт за изследване на интеграцията и фондация “Отворено общество”.
- Богданов, Б. (2006). *Мит и литература: Проблеми на типологията и поетиката на старогръцката литература до епохата на елинизма* (3rd ed.). <https://www.bogdanbogdanov.net/pdf/7.pdf>
- Бърлиева, С. (2003). Служби за свети Седмочисленици. In Л. Грашева (Comp.), *Кирило-Методиевска енциклопедия* (Vol. 3, pp. 680–682). Издателство на БАН.
- Войников, Д. (1983). Покръщение на Преславският двор: Драма в четири действия с пения и осем зрелища. In Д. Леков (Ed.), *Добри Войников: Съчинения в 2 части: Vol. 1. Диалози: Драми* (pp. 141–198). Български писател.
- Георгиев, В. (1968). Откриване на научната сесия: Встъпително слово. In Д. Ангелов, Е. Георгиев, П. Динеков, & К. Мирчев (Eds.), *Климент Охридски: Материали за неговото честване по случай 1050 години от смъртта му* (pp. 15–20). Издателство на БАН.
- Грашева, Л. (2003). Седмочисленици. In Л. Грашева (Comp.), *Кирило-Методиевска енциклопедия* (Vol. 3, pp. 576–580). Издателство на БАН.
- Даскалов, В. (1931). Две ученически забави. *Общински вестник “В. Търново”*, 8(4), 29–30.
- Даскалов, Р. (2018). *Големите разкази за Българското средновековие*. Рива.
- Джевиецка, Е. (2018). “Славянското просвещение” или за функционирането на Кирило-Методиевата традиция в модерната българска култура. *Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne*, 8(15), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.14746/pss.2018.15.5>
- Джевиецка, Е. (2020). *Юбилейно и модерно: Кирило-Методиевият разказ през социализма в България*. БАН, Кирило-Методиевски научен център.

- Динеков, П. (1966, December 8). Литературното дело на Климент Охридски. *Литературен фронт*, 24(50), 1.
- Драгова, Н., & Стефанов, П. (1963). Единадесетата заповед: Драма в осем картини с пролог и епизод. *Театър*, 16(8), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.3051095>
- Дринов, М. (1882). Новий церковно-славянски паметник с упоменением о славянских первоучителях. *Периодическо списание БКД*, 4(14) [addendum].
- Женет, Ж. (2001). *Фигури*. “Фигура”.
- Завчера за пръв път в града ни празнува са с голямо тържество празника на светите седмочислени български просветители. (1863, August, 12). *Съветник (Цариград)*, 2(21), 3.
- Иванова-Гиргинова, М., & Рускова, Е. (2021). *Библейската драма: Пьеси* (Vol. 1). Издателски център “Боян Пенев”.
- Климентовски отбор. (1915). *Упътване как може всяка българска община спроти условията на своето село или град да прослави великата хилядогодишница от смъртта на българския праучител и просветител Св. Кл. Охридски и хилядо години българска просвета на 27 юли 1916 г.* Климентовски отбор при Университета.
- Колева, П. (2003). Празникът на Кирил и Методий. In Л. Грашева (Comp.), *Кирило-Методиевска енциклопедия* (Vol. 3, pp. 269–277). Издателство на БАН.
- Манафова, Р. (1994). Култът към дейността на равноапостолите св. Кирил и Методий и българите (1878–1885). *Македонски преглед*, 48(2), 115–128.
- На 17 юлий в Средец ся отслужи празненство в памет и чест на святите 7-мочисленици български. (1864, August 22). *Съветник (Цариград)*, 3(21), 3.
- Найденова, Д. (2017). “В името на Кирил и Методий”: Кирило-методиевската идея и социалистическата пропаганда. *Slavia Meridionalis*, 17, Article 1349. <https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.1349>
- Народният театър и 11 май. (1914, May 14). *Пряпорец*, 17(106), 1.
- Патриарх Кирил, Патриарх Български. (1971). Как бе отпразнувана 1000-годишнината от смъртта на св. Методий. In *Константин-Кирил Философ: Доклади от симпозиума, посветен на 1000-годишнината от смъртта му* (pp. 55–60). БАН.
- Петров, Е. (1981, May 7). Кинодраматургия – 1980. *Литературен фронт*, 37(19), 7.
- Райнов, Н. (1923). *Имало едно време: Сказание в пролог и 3 действия*. Издателство “Хр. Г. Данов”.
- Симеонова, Г. (2015). Идеята за славянството в светския култ към равноапостолите Кирил и Методий през Българското възрождение. In Е. Атанасова, Г. Лозанова, & С. Стойнев (Eds.), *Празникът на Кирил и Методий: Пространства на духа* (Vol. 1, pp. 26–41). “Парадигма”.
- Стойкова, А. (2008). Славянски култове на Първото българско царство. In А. Милтенова (Ed.), *История на българската средновековна литература* (pp. 297–305). Изток-Запад.
- Теодоров-Балан, А. (1914). *Българска прослава на хилядо години от смъртта на св. Климент Охридски и на хилядо години българска просвета*. Климентов отбор при Софийския университет.
- Топалов, К. (1981). Притча за философа: Пьеса в две действия. *Театър*, 34(5), 82–95.
- Христов, К. (1944). Свети Седмочисленици: Драматическа балада. In К. Христов, *Последни пожари* (pp. 25–32). Издателство “Хр. Г. Данов”.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## (TRANSLITERATION)

- 1100 godini slavianska azbuka i bŭlgarska pismenost. (1963, May 24). *Literaturen front*, 19(21).
- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. VERSO.
- Aretov, N. (2001). *Balkanski identichnosti v bŭlgarskata kultura ot modernata epokha (XIX–XX v.)*. Institut za izsledvane na integratsiata i fondatsiia “Otvoreno obshtestvo”.
- Azmanova-Rudarska, E. (2020). Nauka i praznichnost: Kult i ideologizatsiia kŭm obrazite na sv. Kiril i sv. Metodii i niakoi ot tekhnite uchenitsi v niakoi strani ot Chernomorskiia region v perioda 1945–1990 g. *Balkanistichen forum*, 29(3), 236–249. <https://doi.org/10.37708/bf.swu.v29i3.12>
- Bogdanov, B. (2006). *Mit i literatura: Problemi na tipologiiata i poetikata na starogrŭtskata literatura do epokhata na elinizma* (3rd ed.). <https://www.bogdanbogdanov.net/pdf/7.pdf>
- Bŭrlieva, S. (2003). Sluzhbi za sveti Sedmochislenitsi. In L. Grasheva (Comp.), *Kirilo-Metodievska entsiklopediia* (Vol. 3, pp. 680–682). Izdatelstvo na BAN.
- Daskalov, R. (2018). *Golemite razkazi za Bŭlgarskoto srednovekovie*. Riva.
- Daskalov, V. (1931). Dve uchenicheski zabavi. *Obshtinski vestnik “V. Tŭrnovo”*, 8(4), 29–30.
- Dinekov, P. (1966, December 8). Literaturnoto delo na Kliment Okhridski. *Literaturen front*, 24(50), 1.
- Dragova, N., & Stefanov, P. (1963). Edinadesetata zapoved: Drama v osem kartini s prolog i epilog. *Teatŭr*, 16(8), 57–72. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.3051095>
- Drinov, M. (1882). Noviĭ tserkovno-slavianskiĭ pametnik s upomenaniem o slavianskikh pervouchiteliakh. *Periodicheskoe spisanie BKD*, 4(14) [addendum].
- Dzhevietska, E. (2018). “Slavianskoto prosveshtenie” ili za funktsioniranieto na Kirilo-Metodievatata traditsiia v modernata bŭlgarska kultura. *Poznaŭskie Studia Slawistyczne*, 8(15), 77–97. <https://doi.org/10.14746/pss.2018.15.5>
- Dzhevietska, E. (2020). *IUbileĭno i moderno: Kirilo-Metodieviat razkaz prez sotsializma v Bŭlgariia*. BAN, Kirilo-Metodievski nauchen tsentŭr.
- Georgiev, V. (1968). Otkrivane na nauchnata sesiia: Vstŭpitelno slovo. In D. Angelov, E. Georgiev, P. Dinekov, & K. Mirchev (Eds.), *Kliment Okhridski: Materiali za negovoto chestvane po sluchaĭ 1050 godini ot smŭrtta mu* (pp. 15–20). Izdatelstvo na BAN.
- Grasheva, L. (2003). Sedmochislenitsi. In L. Grasheva (Comp.), *Kirilo-Metodievska entsiklopediia* (Vol. 3, pp. 576–580). Izdatelstvo na BAN.
- Ivanova-Girginova, M., & Ruskova, E. (2021). *Bibleĭskata drama: Piesi* (Vol. 1). Izdatelski tsentŭr “Boian Penev”.
- Khristov, K. (1944). Sveti Sedmochislenitsi: Dramaticheska balada. In K. Khristov, *Posledni pozhari* (pp. 25–32). Izdatelstvo “Khr. G. Danov”.

- Klimentovski otbor. (1915). *Upŭtvane kak mozhe vsiaka bŭlgarska obshtina sproti usloviata na svoeto selo ili grad da proslavi velikata khiliadogodishnitsa ot smŭrtta na bŭlgarskiia prauchitel i prosvetitel Sv. Kl. Okhridski i khiliado godini bŭlgarska prosveta na 27 iuli 1916 g.* Klimentovski otbor pri Universiteta.
- Koleva, P. (2003). Praznikŭt na Kiril i Metodii. In L. Grasheva (Comp.), *Kirilo-Methodievska entsiklopediia* (Vol. 3, pp. 269–277). Izdatelstvo na BAN.
- Manafova, R. (1994). Kultŭt kŭm deinnostta na ravnoapostolite sv. Kiril i Metodii i bŭlgarite (1878–1885). *Makedonski pregled*, 48(2), 115–128.
- Na 17 iulii v Sredets sia otsluzhi praznenstvo v pamet i chest na sviatite 7-mochislenitsi bŭlgarski. (1864, August 22). *Sŭvetnik (TSarigrad)*, 3(21), 3.
- Naidenova, D. (2017). “V imeto na Kiril i Metodii”: Kirilo-metodievskata ideia i sotsialisticheskata propaganda. *Slavia Meridionalis*, 17, Article 1349. <https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.1349>
- Narodniat teatŭr i 11 mai. (1914, May 14). *Priaporets*, 17(106), 1.
- Nazarska, G. (2022). The Nazirites spiritual community in Bulgaria (1950s–1980s). *Balkanistischen forum*, 31(2), 120–136. <https://doi.org/10.37708/bf.swu.v31i2.7>
- Patriarkh Kiril, Patriarkh Bŭlgarski. (1971). Kak be otpraznuvana 1000-godishninata ot smŭrtta na sv. Metodii. In *Konstantin-Kiril Filosof: Dokladi ot simpoziuma, posveten na 1000-godishninata ot smŭrtta mu* (pp. 55–60). BAN.
- Petrov, E. (1981, May 7). Kinodramaturgiia – 1980. *Literaturen front*, 37(19), 7.
- Rainov, N. (1923). *Imalo edno vreme: Skazanie v prolog i 3 deistviia*. Izdatelstvo “Khr. G. Danov”.
- Simeonova, G. (2015). Ideiata za slavianstvoto v svetskiia kult kŭm ravnoapostolite Kiril i Metodii prez Bŭlgarskoto vŭzrazhdane. In E. Atanasova, G. Lozanova, & S. Stoinev (Eds.), *Praznikŭt na Kiril i Metodii: Prostranstva na dukha* (Vol. 1, pp. 26–41). “Paradigma”.
- Stoikova, A. (2008). Slavianski kultove na Pŭrvoto bŭlgarsko tsarstvo. In A. Miltenova (Ed.), *Istoriia na bŭlgarskata srednovekovna literatura* (pp. 297–305). Iztok-Zapad.
- Teodorov-Balan, A. (1914). *Bŭlgarska proslava na khiliado godini ot smŭrtta na sv. Kliment Okhridski i na khiliado godini bŭlgarska prosveta*. Klimentov otbor pri Sofiiskiiia universitet.
- Todorova, M. (2009). *Bones of contention: The living archive of Vasil Levski and the making of Bulgaria's national hero*. Central European University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9786155211638>
- Topalov, K. (1981). Pritcha za filsofa: Piesa v dve deistviia. *Teatŭr*, 34(5), 82–95.
- Voïnikov, D. (1983). Pokrŭshlenie na Preslavskii dvor: Drama v chetiri deistviia s peniia i osem zrelishta. In D. Lekov (Ed.), *Dobri Voïnikov: Sŭchineniia v 2 chasti: Vol. 1. Dialozi: Drami* (pp. 141–198). Bŭlgarski pisatel.
- Zavchera za prŭv pŭt v grada ni praznuva sa s goliama tŭrzhestvo praznika na svetite sedmochisleni bŭlgarski prosvetiteli. (1863, August 12). *Sŭvetnik (TSarigrad)*, 2(21), 3.
- Zhenet, Zh. (2001). *Figuri*. “Figura”.

## **Siedmiu Świętych Mężów. Kult, nowoczesny mit i interpretacje dramatyczne w kulturze bułgarskiej (1869–1989)**

Artykuł poświęcony jest literackim reprezentacjom Siedmiu Świętych Mężów w nowoczesnej kulturze bułgarskiej. Przedmiotem analizy są dramaturgiczne interpretacje świętych (osobno i razem jako grupy) z okresu 1868–1989, które ujawniają specyficzne literacko-histeryczne i społeczno-polityczne warunki kształtowania się nowoczesnego mitu świętych braci Cyryla i Metodego oraz ich uczniów w bułgarskiej narracji narodowej. W centrum uwagi są procesy transformacji, mitologizacji, ideologizacji i polityzacji ich obrazów. W artykule zostało pokazane, w jaki sposób bułgarskie utwory dramatyczne i produkcje teatralne przyczyniają się do rozwijania wielowarstwowego wizerunku świętych i ich dzieła, tj. alfabetu słowiańskiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Siedmiu Świętych Mężów; kultura bułgarska; teatr bułgarski; literatura bułgarska; mit nowoczesny; narracja narodowa

## **The Seven Slavic Saints: Cult, modern myth and dramaturgical interpretation in Bulgarian culture (1869–1989)**

The paper is devoted to the literary representations of the Seven Slavic Saints in modern Bulgarian culture. The subject of analysis is dramaturgical interpretations of the saints (separately and together as a group) in 1868–1989, which reveal the specific literary-historical and socio-political conditions for the formation of a modern myth of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius and their disciples in Bulgarian national thinking. The focus is on the process of the image transformation, mythologizing, ideologizing and politicizing. It is showed how the Bulgarian dramatical works and theatrical productions contribute to the multi-layered images of the saints and their work, i.e. the composition of the Slavic alphabet.

**Keywords:** Seven Slavic Saints; Bulgarian culture; Bulgarian theatre; Bulgarian literature; modern myth; national thinking

**Elena Azmanova-Rudarska** (eazmanova@abv.bg) – doktor w zakresie literatury bułgarskiej, docent w Katerze Literatury i Etnologii na Wydziale Filologicznym Uniwersytetu Południowo-Zachodniego im. Neofita Rylskiego w Bła-

gojewgradzie. Autorka następujących książek: *Мемоаристичните творби след Освобождението – фигури на автора* [Memoarystyka po wyzwoleniu Bułgarii – figury autora, 2010]; *Ритуалното слово в българската лирика след Освобождението* [Słowo rytualne w bułgarskiej poezji po Wyzwoleniu, 2013]; *Народничест-вото в българската литература. Критически ракурси, текстове, учебни материали* [Narodnictwo w literaturze bułgarskiej. Perspektywy krytyczne, teksty, materiały dydaktyczne, 2014]; *Иван Грозев в българската литература. Социални, политически, исторически и религиозно-мистични контексти, полемики и диалози* [Iwan Grozew w literaturze bułgarskiej. Konteksty społeczne, polityczne, historyczne i religijno-mistyczne, polemiki i dialogi, 2018]. Zainteresowania badawcze: estetyka i polityka w literaturze bułgarskiej; historia kultury bułgarskiego odrodzenia narodowego i nowego państwa; teoria nowoczesności.

**Elena Azmanova-Rudarska** (eazmanova@abv.bg) – PhD in Bulgarian Literature, associate professor at the Faculty of Philology, Department of Literature and Ethnology, “Neofit Rilski” South-West University in Blagoevgrad. Author of the books: *Мемоаристичните творби след Освобождението – фигури на автора* [Memoir Works After the Bulgarian Liberation – Figures of the Author, 2010], *Ритуалното слово в българската лирика след Освобождението* [The Ritual Words in Bulgarian Lyrics after Bulgarian Liberation, 2013], *Народничеството в българската литература. Критически ракурси, текстове, учебни материали* [Populism in Bulgarian Literature: Critical Angles, Texts, Educational Materials, 2014], *Иван Грозев в българската литература. Социални, политически, исторически и религиозно-мистични контексти, полемики и диалози* [Ivan Grozew in Bulgarian Literature: Social, Political, Historical and Religious-Mystical Contexts, Polemics and Dialogues, 2018]. Research interests: the aesthetic and political in Bulgarian literature, cultural history of the Bulgarian National Revival and of the new state, theory of modernity.

