



STATEMENT

By Associate Professor Kostadin Bonev Kostadinov, on the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific field 8.4. Film and Theater Art to Elitsa Stefanova Mateeva.

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Kostadin Bonev

Candidate: Elitsa Mateeva

Topic:

THE "DOGMA 95" MANIFESTO. REFLECTIONS ON THE LATEST BULGARIAN CINEMA

Academic Supervisor: Prof. Petya Alexandrova, DSc.

I. Brief Candidate Biography

Elitsa Mateeva earned her degree from the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts "Kr. Sarafov" in Sofia, specializing in Theatre Studies, in 2006. She has further specialized in the field of theatre directing under the mentorship of Prof. Plamen Markov and in theatre theory during a program in Moscow, facilitated by the "Grotowski – Thomas Richards" Centre, Pontedera, Italy.

She has participated in seminars on theatre theory held in Portugal and Spain.

Theatre director and playwright.

Film moderator in the "Art" department at the Regional Library Varna.

Artistic director of Film School "Lumière Brothers" at the Center for Personal Development Support - Municipal Children's Complex - Varna.

Author of three books on cinema: "Between Theatre and Cinema", "The Whole World is... Cinema", "European Cinema for Non-traditionalists - Cinema Directors FOR the Rainbow".

Author of publications on cinema and theatre in newspapers "Dnevnik", "Kinoto.bg", "Culture", "Marginalia", "Litclub.bg", "Atrvarna.net", "Linternet.bg".

II. Objectives and Tasks of the Dissertation

In her dissertation, Elitsa Mateeva undertakes a thorough analysis of the latest manifesto in the world of cinema which emphasizes the commitment of its creators and proponents to viewing film art as a significant cause. Over the past decade, the Dogma 95 principles have gained considerable attention, particularly in the theoretical explorations of film critics seeking transformative shifts. It is worth noting that the success of Danish cinema primarily stems from the talent of its filmmakers, rather than the mandatory adoption of Dogma 95 principles.

Mateeva's research examines the Manifesto's role as a catalyst in the evolution of film language and explores its potential implications beyond Denmark, albeit limited. Additionally, she examines the defining traits of emerging Bulgarian films, which may incorporate elements of the Manifesto, however conditional this may be.

A notable aspect of Mateeva's study is the dual interpretation of the Manifesto: one aspect concerns the theses and criteria related to visual aesthetics, while another revolves around the moral imperatives set forth by its creators. This latter aspect notably resonates with certain Bulgarian directors who are shaping contemporary cinema in the 21st century.

The outlined **objectives** include presenting various 20th-century documents that diverge in their aesthetic and social orientations but share characteristics of a manifesto. Furthermore, Mateeva aims to analyze Dogma 95, explore the works of Danish directors who have declared themselves supporters of the "Dogma 95" system and have produced films adhering to its principles. Finally, she compares the outcomes of a specific experiment where the film production process strictly adheres to the Manifesto with the defining features of selected Bulgarian films.

III. Research Thesis of the Dissertation

In her study, Elitsa Mateeva examines Dogma 95 as an intellectual provocation. Its authors and ideologues reject dominant strategies in the production and distribution processes prevalent in global cinema, especially in Hollywood productions. Beyond the technically unfeasible requirements, the manifesto emphasizes the authority of the author and the genre purity of the production.

Regarding Bulgarian production in the last 25 years, Elitsa Mateeva rightly notes the absence of a conducive environment for the development of Dogma 95 elements, limiting them only to certain aspects related to image and sound.

IV. Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into three parts: The first part serves as an introduction and analyzes existing manifestos predating Dogma 95. Each of these, whether emphasizing aesthetics, social aspects, or politics, opposes the existing order and the imposed status quo. Such is the energy of the Danish creators who declared their inclinations in Dogma 95. Lars von Trier stands out as the primary instigator of Dogma 95. His inclination toward the paradoxical and his propensity to downplay his own achievements, occasionally bordering on self-destructiveness depending on his mental state, are recurring traits in all his works—both pre- and post-Dogma 95. The manifesto was endorsed by Thomas Vinterberg, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, and Kristian Levring. The language of the manifesto brims with self-irony, and demonstrates a tendency to be perceived more as a joke.

As previously noted, the success of Danish cinema from the 1990s onwards, in my subjective view, can be attributed to the remarkable talents of a collective of screenwriters and directors. They succeeded in assembling teams of elite film practitioners and over the years nurtured a plethora of world-class actors. Dogma 95 represents a vital component of this distinctive creative phenomenon. It's noteworthy that "The Idiots" holds the 15th spot among Lars von Trier's films, underscoring its significance in his body of work. [/https://collider.com/lars-von-trier-movies-ranked/](https://collider.com/lars-von-trier-movies-ranked/)

The Bulgarian films analyzed in the third chapter share a common dominant theme: the absence of love. These films consciously reject audience preferences. Their visual system is ascetic and devoid of vibrant visual solutions. The author's thesis regarding the analyzed films is: "Questions in the present and uncertainty in the future."

V. Contributions of the Dissertation

1. A theoretical model of analysis has been developed through literary, documentary, and scholarly sources.
2. For the first time in Bulgarian theory, cinema manifestos have been systematized.
3. An exhaustive panorama of the important figures in Danish cinema from the late 1980s to the present day has been achieved.
4. The study analyzes the place and significance of the experiment as a disciplining challenge in the cinematographic process.

VI. Critical Notes and Recommendations

This is an ambitious scholarly work distinguished by analytical depth and contemporary, modern perspectives. The Dogma 95 experiment has been extensively researched without unnecessary emotional biases. The Bulgarian connection to the Danish model, though mediated and indirect, represents an attempt by Bulgarian cinema to position itself in a European and global context.

I have no critical notes or recommendations.

VII. Conclusion

I unequivocally give a positive assessment of Elitsa Mateeva's candidacy for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "DOCTOR" in scientific direction 8.4 Film and Theater Art.

Date: 29.04.2024

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Kostadin Bonev - Bulgarian film director, lecturer in film directing at the University of Blagoevgrad "Neofit Rilski", guest lecturer in documentary film dramaturgy at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts "Kr. Sarafov", recipient of national and international awards .