

Outsiders and Runaways by Tzvetan Stoyanov as an ‘Apophatic’ Critique: On the Attempt to Think Independently in Unfree Times

Abstract

The article examines how Tzvetan Stoyanov’s essay “Outsiders and Runaways” situates itself within the intellectual context of the 1960s in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, reading it as a point of intersection between ideological constraint and the gradual opening towards Western ideas. The analysis highlights the ways in which Stoyanov conceptualises the phenomenon of the outsider through dialogue with the philosophical and literary paradigms of the postwar West. These intertextual resonances are treated as intellectual mediations through which a specific regime of cultural translation emerges – one that filters Western concepts through the language of socialist criticism. In this sense, Stoyanov appears as a figure whose position as an Anglicist affords him access to proscribed books and theories, while his writing translates the notions of freedom, autonomy, and alienation into forms acceptable within the critical discourse of the period. Thus, *Outsiders and Runaways* becomes an act of intellectual emancipation within the boundaries of the possible – a Bulgarian reading of a theme proscribed by socialist realism: human solitude, moral dissent, and inner freedom. In contrast to socialist culture, which demanded that the outsider be rejuvenated, simplified, and secondarily infantilised, Stoyanov conceives of him as a morally autonomous subject capable of independent thought in unfree times.

Keywords

Tzvetan Stoyanov; outsider; escapist socialist realism; American postwar novel; English postwar novel

“You’re monstrously selfish. You’re a coward. You don’t care about right or wrong; you worship nothing except your own worst instincts.”

(Updike 1960, 112).¹ This is an iconic diagnosis of the character Harry Angstrom in John Updike's novel "Rabbit, Run" (1960). It shows the order of prosperity as a system in which the dominant group has the power to set the norms and project *the worst characteristics onto the "different"*. Society in the novel functions as a mechanism that, along with the multitude of material goods, also produces its own structure of exclusion, and human subjectivity is reduced to participation in the established order – *to be* means to reproduce the established signs. Thus, maturity (the hero is twenty-six years old, a husband, a father, a former basketball champion, an employee in a small town and the owner of a two-storey house with a tidy garden and an unused veranda) turns out to be a life without content.

On a similar existential basis, Tzvetan Stoyanov models the field of his analysis in the essay "Outsiders and Runaways" written in 1971, which brings together philosophy and a literary review of the Western canon, which places *people overboard at the center of the narratives* (Stoyanov 1988a). The novel *Rabbit, Run* takes a central place in the structure of the essay, as a focal lens in which the lines of alienation, escapism and modern nihilism converge. If we follow Tzvetan Stoyanov's logic, the outsider in the 1960s is not so much an age diagnosis as a mode of existence and a state that encompasses both adolescents and adults, even characters oversaturated with roles, the result of a clash between man and the self-reproducing social order.

This model has already been conceptualized in several theoretical books, such as "The Outsider" (1956) by the British philosopher, critic, and essayist Colin Wilson, which was the first work to define the figure of *the outsider* as a symptom of modern alienation and refusal of social integration. For Wilson, the outsider is not simply an isolated person, but one who "sees the world more vividly and more nakedly" (Wilson 1956, 217). This painful insight sets him apart from others because his suffering is a form of vision, not a delusion. The model is also present in the concepts of postwar American sociology in authors such as William Whyte "The Organization Man" (1956) and C. Wright Mills' "The Power Elite" (1957), which describe the mechanism by which social integration becomes an instrument of control. Ironically paraphrasing Shakespeare, Whyte asserts that conformity lies not in the system but in the man who conforms to it: "The fault, dear Brutus,

¹ The novel was published in Bulgarian in 1967, translated by Juliana Kasabova.

is not in our organizations, but in ourselves” (Whyte 1956, 7). Mills argues similarly, for him power is not so much coercion as an insidious form of consent: “The masses are not governed by force, nor even so much by power as by manipulated consent” (Mills 1956, 321).

In 1965, the fundamental study of the social dynamics between the center and the periphery appeared: “The Established and the Outsiders” by Norbert Elias and John Scotson. In it, the relationship between the “established” and the “outsiders” is conceived not as an antagonism between classes, but as an internal logic of each community. The established have the power and resources to define norms and impose the image of others through social stigmas, attributing to them the worst characteristics. These differences are reproduced symbolically – through language, rumors, rituals, institutions and official culture, which legitimize the moral asymmetry between center and periphery: “The established group monopolizes the power to define and stigmatize. It can impose on itself a ‘group charisma’ and on others a corresponding ‘group shame’. Rumor and public opinion are its chief weapons” (Elias and Scotson 1965, xi–xii). Thus, Elias and Scotson show that even within the same social environment, internal hierarchies of status and belonging are built – structures that Tzvetan Stoyanov reads filtered through the class approach, but also through the optics of spiritual and existential exclusion.

Right at the beginning of his essay, Tzvetan Stoyanov specifies that outsiderism is not just a social diagnosis or a moral posture, but a process with different degrees and manifestations – from the passivity of a person who does not feel connected to society to a literal *Robinson Crusoe* (Stoyanov 1988a, 20), each of its forms expressing the aspiration of the individual to restore the broken connection with the world not by changing the social order, but by changing his own attitude towards it. The outsider does not fight with the world, but strives to regain his place in it, seeking *an individual way out*. In this perspective, Stoyanov views escape and alienation not as a sign of weakness, but as an attempt at moral resilience and an effort of consciousness to preserve its autonomy in a situation in which the social structure does not allow for attractive collective positions. Stoyanov leaves the position of social rebellion empty – a territory entirely reserved for the man of the communist world, and this gap is strategically maintained so that the essay can safely deal with the autonomous man of the West and his individual moral drama.

It is also significant that, alongside the adolescent Holden Caulfield from Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye" (1951) and Alan Sillitoe's "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner" (1959), Stoyanov ranks a whole gallery of mature characters for whom *outsiderism* is not a pedagogical problem. Like Kingsley Amis's debut novel "Lucky Jim" (1954), whose character Jim Dixon, a young university history lecturer, about 25 years old, is filled with disgust "at this whole tiresome circus show called academic life" (Amis 1954, 112). Or Alan Sillitoe with "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" (1958), a novel whose hero (a young worker, rebellious, individualistic, cynical and full of contempt for the established order) has a brief philosophy: "Don't let the bastards grind you down." (Sillitoe 1958, 46).

To almost the entire line of *the Angry Young Men*, who outlined the British version of alienation, which was crude, ironic and class-conscious, Stoyanov adds the American beatniks Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, as well as the playwrights of the post-war absurdity Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee. In his words, "the American 'beatniks' adopted the basic philosophical and emotional-psychological position of the 'angry' people, combining it with something from existentialism, the resulting cross fell on favorable soil, it adopted features from the local 'climate', from the entire American specificity, and thus a peculiar, hitherto unseen 'flora' was born." (Stoyanov 1988a, 14). In this respect, the analysis continues to Truman Capote and John Updike.

In his interpretation, Stoyanov directly quotes only the American sociologist and public critic Paul Goodman, author of "Growing Up Absurd"² (1960). Goodman belongs to the intellectual circle of the American *New Left*, associated with the anti-war movement, and formulates the diagnosis of *the refusal to mature* not as a result of personal weakness, but of the incompatibility between the need for meaning and the sterile order of organized society: "The young cannot find a place in society because the available models of maturity are not worth emulating" (Goodman 1960, 13). It is this idea that Tzvetan Stoyanov translates into his own context, thus presenting the escape of modern man not as an infantile reaction, but as a form of moral defense against a world in which maturity has become synonymous with conformism.

That is why Stoyanov chooses characters in whom outsiderism is a chronic (and, in his words, *sinister*) condition. Thus, Harry from Updike's "Rabbit, Run" is a young but socially accomplished hero

² The translation of the title is according to Stoyanov 1988a, 25.

in whom the incompatibility between personal conscience and the norms of well-being takes the form of moral paralysis.

Stoyanov traces this pattern to its most sinister possible limit (excluding Anthony Burgess's "A Clockwork Orange", which is not the subject of analysis) in Truman Capote's novel "In Cold Blood" (1966), a work based on a true crime that established the genre of literary nonfiction. At its center are two sudden killers, Perry Smith and Richard Hickok, who cold-bloodedly murder the Clutter family, respectable and well-intentioned members of the middle class from a small Kansas town who never lock their house. In Stoyanov's words, this is "a truly tragic conflict, more tragic than anything seen before, a desire to spit in the face of a hated world, to slap their identity card on the table as a bloody antithesis, and through the act of crime, they are realized according to the logic of rebellion." Tzvetan-Stoyanov's "logic of rebellion" is in harmony with the thinking of Western philosophers and critics – from Leslie Fiedler with his *joyful horror of desecration*, through Ihab Hassan and the figure of *the innocent criminal*, Herbert Marcuse and *aesthetic negation*, to Adorno with *negative epiphanies* and Richard Poirier, who sees in the very act of writing a rejection of *mechanical virtue*³. In all of them, the violent act is a moral, not a generational paradox and an action that carries guilt, but precisely through it it exposes the traumatic truth about normative virtue as a disguised form of violence that gives rise to aggression. In a discreet way, in such logic one could also recognize the dogma of socialist realism (the core of socialist realist melodrama), according to which everyone must be necessarily happy, because in the communist world the causes of human suffering have been eliminated once and for all.

We see that in Tzvetan Stoyanov the outsider is not necessarily a teenager, nor necessarily a radical rebel. While communist ideology presents him as an infantile antipode of the old capitalism, his true function is more flexible. He is a product of systemic fatigue and a general regime of alienation. In the young this alienation explodes, in the mature it corrodes, but the general focus is on the person outside the board, who

³ See: Fiedler (1960); Hassan (1961); Marcuse (1955); Adorno (1991); Poirier (1966).

does not seek acceptance, but *throws their identity card* in the registry of public indifference, where identity is an administrative ritual.

In 1965, Bulgarian readers first encountered two iconic figures of the Western outsider – Holden Caulfield (“The Catcher in the Rye”) and Colin Smith (“The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner”). Both are young, alienated, in conflict with institutions and the false codes of maturity. Caulfield refuses to grow up because he sees maturity as moral corruption, and Smith because he refuses to become a symbol of social consent. In the context of the Cold War, however, their protest is translated ideologically and they serve as evidence of the “rot” of capitalism. Thus, in the East, the outsider is rejuvenated in order to be reworked through the lens of re-education. It is permissible only if it coincides with the rejuvenated socialist morality, where the vitality of the young confronts the fatigue of the old.

The youth problem in the 1960s, to the extent that it was recognized in the Eastern Bloc, served to justify real social tensions disguised as a recurrence of the cult period. The conflict of *young versus old* concealed the problems of power, as youth became a universal emblem of communism, and old age became a bearer of dogmatism attributed to the time of the cult. It is clear that this discourse would collapse if the young began to think and rebel. Real adolescents with real conflicts of growing up do not coincide with the youth theme of literature. The outsider is permissible only if he can be rehabilitated through vocational schools, youth labor camps, Komsomol organizations and other “temples” of communist morality, which neutralized the tension and secondary infantilized individuals. As Yevgeny Dobrenko notes, “totalitarian culture is highly infantile, it does not seek to overcome childhood asociality, but turns it into the norm; the goal is to retain structural immaturity, naivety, and susceptibility to the desires of power” (Dobrenko 1992, 168). Thus, socialist realism becomes not an instrument of awareness and maturation, but of infantilization, and the hero must remain a place where the authorities think of themselves as good and caring.

Images that carry the charge of the Western outsider are impossible in a socialist realist context. They resemble a fresh crime, after the accused murderer has already been executed. They are permissible only as an echo of the “cult” period, a ghost of the bourgeois past or a xenophobic delusion, and never as a product of the socialist present.

Thus, well-packaged in ideological packaging and branded as cultural sabotage, in 1965 the idea of the existence of a youth

problem comparable to that of the West crept into Bulgarian cultural publicity. In the essay “Psychology of the Tape-Recorded Youth” from the collection “Life with a Capital and a Small Letter” (published by “Narodna Mladezh”, 1965), Julian Vuchkov captures a generation deeply penetrated by the Western model of behavior:

“These prematurely aged youths have no noble restraints; they do not know the feeling of duty to others; they are too preoccupied with themselves; they humiliate their loved ones effortlessly and with undisguised pleasure; they have no real friends, their relationships are based on mutual interest; insensitive people with cold souls; self-satisfied; impudent; with lustful glances; with abrupt, shameless movements; with cold and rude intonations; prematurely overcome by the passion to live like experienced women and men; they do not know the delightful taste of youthful gullibility; they are touchingly indulgent towards the “infantile”, they welcome them as amusing jesters; they do not like physical labor; weak and completely mediocre students”. (Vuchkov 1965, 73-77)

What Vuchkov calls “premature maturity” is actually the necessary condition for the completion of the personality – a process that psychology has long described as the path by which a person becomes autonomous, separating himself from collective models and archetypes. Behind the surface of “shamelessness”, “lust”, and “self-satisfaction” lies a refusal to remain immature – a condition that ideology requires in order to remain obedient, enthusiastic and morally transparent. And although through reproach, Vuchkov captures the psychological tension between enforced social immaturity and the desire for individual autonomy. Young people who are “too busy with themselves” are actually trying to realize their own identity outside the collective scheme. Their “premature maturity” is a way to escape from the role of eternally educated – a kind of moral emancipation that the ideological consciousness cannot recognize as natural.

The youth described, listening to jazz and rock, dressing in Western fashion, devoted to pleasures and devoid of high ideals, are, of course, stigmatized, but in his lavish criticism Vuchkov highlights some of the social and moral mechanisms that give rise to them. The author sees in this phenomenon an accumulation of family and personal conditions that lead to apathy and spiritual fatigue. The bright representatives of

this type are “sons and daughters of people with promising material opportunities – engineers, doctors, lawyers with private practice, artists, heads of institutes and facilities” (Vuchkov 1965, 93-94). We see that Vuchkov does not reach the party elite in his criticism, and affects the intelligentsia and the circles of professionally successful but politically disempowered strata.⁴

Again in 1965, for the first time in Bulgaria, an attempt was made to capture the social and moral image of the young generation through direct polling. The book “Self-Portrait of a Generation” (Panayotov 1965), compiled on the basis of a survey with over 6700 participants, presents itself as a mirror of young people between the ages of 17 and 30 – schoolchildren, university students, young workers and employees. The questions asked explore their personal goals, sense of meaning, attitude towards work, love and society. Formally, the study was conceived as evidence of the ideological maturity of communist youth. Most of those surveyed said that they wanted to become full-fledged builders of socialism and work for the triumph of communism. But behind the declarative answers, another generational tension is visible. Among hundreds of formulations of duty, discipline, and the ideal of *edification*, confessions such as “I once had a goal, but now I don’t,” “I used to have dreams, but now I follow the hearse that burys them.” These isolated but authentic voices suggest the emergence of an apathetic, disoriented generation, different from the heroic models of the previous decade. The book marks an effort by which the state and the party officially begin to search for a more credible face for youth⁵. But both the poll and Vuchkov’s essay show an inability to speak openly

⁴ Trying to explain the phenomenon, Vuchkov refers to the American professor Leo Gurko, whom he quotes with the book *Crisis of the American Dream*, dedicated to the moral voids and decline of ideals in modern society. Most likely, Vuchkov is referring to the work *The Angry Decade: American Literature and Thought from 1929 to Pearl Harbor* (1947), in which Gurko traces the spiritual fatigue of the American intelligentsia between the two wars, the loss of heroic foundations, and the advent of commercial thinking. See: Gurko (1947).

⁵ From articles published on the website of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists, we learn that the survey began as a game-poll in the newspaper “Narodna Mladezh” in April 1963. The invitation to share their thoughts on goals, ideals, happiness and love was answered by such a large number of people that *postmen were forced to replace traditional bags with sacks to deliver the thousands of questionnaires* (Mechkova 2023). The results were published on January 24–25, 1964, and *their reactions aroused wide public interest – from comments in the Western press to discussions in the Bulgarian media* (Kudrinova 2023). It is important, however, that the participants were not anonymous – the letters contained not only a name, but also an address, which suggests a high degree of self-control. Realizing that their answers could be recognized and even used as evidence of loyalty, many were probably tempted to formulate their positions in a way that would sound acceptable in the public sphere. In the context of the 1960s, such openness was not harmless, because an inappropriate reply could be interpreted as political irresponsibility and affect future professional realization.

about a generation that no longer believes in the language of the ideal, but does not yet have a legitimate alternative for self-determination.

Against this background, youth crime in the Eastern Bloc in the mid-1960s acquired ominous statistics (peaking in the USSR in 1965). Suicides among minors increased, early pregnancies and abortions increased, drug addiction entered the criminal register, difficult students were eliminated by transferring them to correctional boarding schools and night schools⁶. The system overwhelmingly nurtured the convenient – those who confirmed the lack of inequality in socialist society.

In 1964, the social crisis that statistics conceal found visibility through the case of Arkady Neiland. A fifteen-year-old homeless man who grew up in boarding schools and labor schools, who in January 1964 committed a robbery and a double murder, motivated by a desire for *a sweet life*. At the trial, Arkady displayed naive directness, declaring that after his release he would continue *as before*. The remark was perceived as an ideological challenge. Despite the legal ban on the execution of minors, on August 11, 1964, he was convicted and shot after an extraordinary resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which allowed the application of the death penalty retroactively.

The following year, the cultural reaction was shaped and accepted by the film “Beware of the Car” (1966, directed by Eldar Ryazanov), which offered a morally acceptable version of the juvenile delinquent. The hero, Yuri Detochkin, is an idealistic thief who steals cars from speculators to donate the money to orphanages. Like Neiland, he has not parents and lives away from institutions, but the system tolerates him because his crimes serve as moral correction, not destruction. Arkady Neiland and Yuri Detochkin represent the two ends of the social scale – the impossible and the permissible outsider. In the first case, the system erases the deviation with the coolness of an administrative correction, in the second it integrates him as an example of humanity.

In 1965, Bulgarian literature (in rhythm with Soviet literature) also turned its attention to young people without parents or with “incorrect” origins for the first time. Chiko, Flori and Michona from Gencho Stoev’s “Bad Day” appeared on the stage, along with Raina from Blaga Dimitrova’s “Journey to Yourself” and Ani from Rangel Valchanov’s film “The Wolf”, based on a screenplay by Haim Oliver. These were the

⁶ See: Krasnov (2017).

earliest socialist realist social dramas about the unwanted children of socialism. The literacy of the intellectual Raina is a symbolic territory that must be conquered by introducing an internal enemy, equipped with the language of desires, who would separate her from people until she was forced to forget him in order to be accepted. And the Western-worshipping Ana resembles a trophy snatched from the legion of enemy languages, through such intimate language of the father, in the person of the director of the vocational education school, that one of the antagonists, a servile and dogmatic teacher, writes a denunciation of seduction. And Gencho Stoev's novel "Bad Day" is focused around more illiterate youth. A rare case in which illiteracy helps. They are on the threshold of adulthood, in the process of checking and entering the class. The boys do not exchange hugs, but fists. Potential Arkadyevites, but with a chance for artistic salvation. The heroes of the three works react to the ideological call in three different ways – Chico blocks the language of power through aggressive body signals and *gypsy-like teething*; Ana changes under the influence of the director through stylistic transposition (change of gait, register, role); Raina performs a psychological disassembly – she dismantles her class origin and personal guilt in order to return to the collective with a rearranged internal morphology. In all three works, there are no bright negative images of educators, but only in "Bad Day" does the development of the main character's image follow the logic of a planned escape abroad, albeit indirectly explained.

However, in the same year, the filming process began, and in 1966, "Monday Morning" was completed – a film in which the central figure is again a girl with a mild demeanor, but without a pedagogical twist and without institutional correction. It was stopped by censorship and remained locked up until 1988 due to its direct, discouraging and realistic tone. This is precisely what shows the boundary between permissible and unacceptable courage and is the real test of reformist provocation.⁷

It is clear that such characters can only be illuminated as symptoms of foreign influence, and not as problems of socialist modernity. Thus,

⁷ See: Angelova (2025).

a kind of analytical-conceptual vacuum arises, in which it is Tzvetan Stoyanov who shapes a field of articulation. His essays constitute a performative scene of thought, within which the problem of outsiderism can be examined in detail, without being spoken of as local. Stoyanov speaks of the Western man, but through a language that already projects the figure of his Eastern double. Although related to the Western culture of youth, the description is also tailored to urban youth in communist Bulgaria:

“...a striving for the open road, understood as an immediate existential movement, free verse, destroying smooth poetry, vagabond romance, transgressing the norm of decency, even through the norms of criminal laws, hooligan life as a model, the sexual, free demonstration of sexual experience as the most existential of all other refuges, instinct is good, reason as a moral norm is evil, a return to the primitive, to vagrancy, quick friendship, falling in love and loving...” (Stoyanov 1988a, 17)

The essay “Outsiders and Runaways” appears after a series of texts in which Tzvetan Stoyanov gradually builds the conceptual framework of his theory of alienation. “Shaiki”⁸ (1964), “The Threads That Are Severed” (1967, 1988b) and “Hippie “subculture”” (1968) trace the phenomenon through its social, moral and cultural expressions – from deviation, through denial and nihilism to doomed attempts at a happy outcome. In these earlier texts, the idea of alienation is framed in separate fields. In “Shaiki” it manifests itself through the figure of the gangster and group violence, in “The Threads That Are Severed” – through the drama of existentialism, and in “Hippie “subculture”” – through the image of the hippies who transform escape into hope for a deceptive freedom. Gradually, the individual fields coalesce into a single problematic of man as a subject of alienation, who does not simply flee from the world, but tries to restore his own moral position within it. Thus, the figure of the outsider becomes a generalized model of modern rejection.

We should note that all these essays become possible because they create the alibi of ideological criticism of the “bourgeois” and the “guild”, through the rhetoric against the Western world, which was

⁸ “Shaiki” – a label used to describe loosely organized youth groupings.

characteristic of the period and encouraged by the authorities. But in this way Stoyanov builds a consistent line of thought for the man on this side of the Iron Curtain, as through the description of the ideological enemy the taboo on talking about the real problems of the young man who “has no place anywhere and his attempt to establish a connection, to humanize his existence turns out to be fatal” (Stoyanov 1988a, 20). In the form of strategic denial, criticism becomes an effective form of saturation with objective information in conditions of censorship.

In the same years, when the concept of alienation was consolidated around the figure of the outsider, Tzvetan Stoyanov lived among similar characters and as a translator – from the romantic vision of Shelley (“Selected Lyrics”, 1959) and the harsh realism of Erskine Caldwell (“Georgia Boy”, 1960) to the social drama of John Braine (“Room at the Top”, 1964; “Life at the Top”, 1965) and the ethical anxiety of Harper Lee (“To Kill a Mockingbird”, 1965). In the multi-volume edition of Jack London he translated the characters of existential ordeal and escape to nature, while in Carl Sandburg’s “Clean Hands” (1967) and in the collection “Contemporary English Poets” (1969) he encountered the poetic forms of the same ethic of individualism.

This translation biography is not just a side field, but a lived experience with the characters with whom he would later populate the essay “Outsiders and Runaways”. By translating, he is already researching. And it is this inner erudition that prepares him for the encounter with the Western corpus of interpretations, in which the figure of the outsider gradually establishes itself as a key model of modern consciousness.

In Western literary thought from the 1950s to the 1970s, a stable corpus of interpretations was formed, which constructed the figure of the outsider as a central cultural and ethical type of modernity. The beginning, as we have said, was set by Colin Wilson, who proposed a model of spiritual and existential sensitivity, striving for meaning. Through an analysis of the work of Dostoevsky, Hesse, Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Hemingway, Blake, Nietzsche, T. E. Lawrence, Van Gogh, the choreographer Vaclav Nezhdinsky, etc., a panorama of geniuses and loners who live in conflict with the social order is outlined. In Stoyanov,

this contour is clearly recognizable, but acquires an American shift – towards Mark Twain, Jack London, Salinger, Kerouac, Ginsberg. And while Wilson seeks the philosophy of *exclusivity* and *exclusion* on the border between the sublime and madness, Stoyanov concretizes it in moral and social incompatibility with the norms of the capitalist world.

The next key figure is Leslie Fiedler, an American critic, essayist, and provocative theorist whose book “Love and Death in the American Novel” (1960) proposes a reading of American literature through a mythology of immaturity expressed in the fear of sexual and social engagement. American novelists, he argues, bypass scenes that “traditionally stand at the center of European narrative. Although they are specialists in humiliation, loneliness, and fear, they usually avoid depicting the passionate encounter between man and woman” (Fiedler 1960, 26). According to him, the characters of Cooper, Melville, Twain, and Faulkner inhabit a world in which friendship replaces intimacy, nature replaces home, and movement rejects responsibility to community. Fiedler shows that the American novel is built on the myth of eternal childhood. Thus, the image of the river in *Huckleberry Finn*, the figure of male friendship as an alternative to the social order, and the motif of the impossible return echo in Tzvetan Stoyanov, albeit in a different register:

“Huck goes with Jim on a raft down the Mississippi, then flees from the bloody family wars, a symbol of internal American conflict, he also flees from the crooks among whom he falls, another symbol of American conflict, in the end, when he is already settled and saved, he says that he is getting bored again and that he will run away to Indian land, because they want to make him a virtuous citizen, and he cannot stand this.” (Stoyanov 1988a, 11).

Fiedler’s text was probably little known in Bulgaria and its influence on Stoyanov was indirect, but their ideas meet in the common intuition about loneliness as a form of ethical salvation.

Another influential book, written shortly before Tzvetan Stoyanov published his essay, is Richard Poirier’s “A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature” (1966). From Emerson and Thoreau to Fitzgerald and Faulkner, Poirier traces how writers construct autonomous territories of consciousness, where words become a refuge from the social order. The American critic thinks of artistic language as a form of ethics, and style itself is for him both a fugitive

and an outsider, deviating from the norm to create its own territory of freedom, because “artistic language always tries to escape from the world that created it” (Poirier 1966, 23). According to this ethic, the writer is obliged to conquer a place where thought can remain independent of the pressure of the collective. Thus, for Poirier, style becomes a form of life, and words a gesture of existence against the order. For Stoyanov, the idea of style is more of an attempt at decorative escape; he describes the beatniks as a complete, complete ornamental style, “they create their own publications, their own art, their own songs and dances, their own appearance and clothing, marked by general carelessness and raggedness, all of this – an expression of their desire to distance themselves from ‘respectable’ America” (Stoyanov 1988a, 15). According to Stoyanov, upon deeper insight, one sees “that this is externally overplayed, that the encounter with the other is only an ‘experience,’ a moment, with all the randomness and doom of the moment” (Stoyanov 1988a, 15). We see that while for Poirier style is a form of ethics and an internal principle of autonomy, for Stoyanov it remains above all *an overplayed* aesthetic strategy of distancing, *forced desire*, and self-affirmation on the surface (Stoyanov 1988a, 16).

In terms of thematic scope, Tzvetanov may have been influenced by Ihab Hassan’s book “Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel” (1961), one of the most incisive postwar studies of American literature. Hasan speaks of *the radical innocence* of the hero who, thrown into a meaningless world, “refuses to accept the world’s guilt and seeks salvation through solitude and renunciation.” (Hassan 1961, 12). Salinger and the beatniks are his central examples – the same ones that Stoyanov also brings out as symptoms of the new moral outsider, but in the prism of “forced togetherness and sectarian intimacy” (Stoyanov 1988a, 16).

If we compare the authors studied by Western theorists with Stoyanov’s observations, we can detect clear conceptual and semantic consonances and understandable ideological divergences. With Wilson, the similarity is in the definition of the type; he is the most direct terminological and conceptual source that formulates the outsider as a figure of modern homelessness. With Fiedler and Poirier, the similarity is in the American topography of escape, where the river, the road, the border are symbols of movement towards utopian freedom. With Ihab Hassan, the common horizon is the post-war psychology of innocence, where detachment becomes an

ethical resource. Stoyanov unites these lines without imitating them. He Americanizes the figure of the outsider, but translates it through the moral sensitivity of the Eastern European intellectual, for whom escape is a form of misdirected individual effort.

However, the only authority that Stoyanov directly quotes is Arnold Toynbee, translating his words that “every civilization dies not when it is destroyed from without, but when it self-destructs from within.” (Stoyanov 1988a, 17). The quote is not a decoration, but a key concept through which outsiderism is thought of not as an individual drama, but as a symptom of a civilization that has lost faith in itself. The critic reads Toynbee not as a historian, but as a moralist. The thesis that every civilization dies from within becomes for him a diagnosis of modern man. In the essay “Hippie “Subculture”, Toynbee is also quoted, who sees the youth movement as the last religious symptom of an exhausted civilization. Thus, Toynbee becomes for Stoyanov a clear axis along which the historical diagnosis of decline is rewritten as an anthropology of conscience.

Some of the diagnoses of Western neo-Marxists, among whom Herbert Marcuse is particularly influential, although he is not directly quoted, sound in a similar register. Both think of alienation as an internal mechanism of Western civilization, but while for Marcuse the new youth culture is a source of aesthetic revolution through a return to the body and play, because “*art, play and eroticism remain the last refuges of freedom*” (Marcuse 1955, 187), for Stoyanov it is a symptom of cultural agony. We can place Theodor W. Adorno and György Lukács close to Tzvetan Stoyanov’s sensitivity. In the book “The Culture Industry” (1947), Adorno shows how industrial culture depersonalizes man, and *mass society* is a form of invisible enslavement, because “mechanization has such power over man’s free time and happiness that it completely determines the production of entertainment”, and as a response, entertainment replaces thinking. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947 [2002]). In “The Destruction of Reason” (1954), Lukács also traces the disintegration of rational consciousness in the modern era, in which “man loses his orientation in the world, irrationalism begins to present the arbitrariness of subjective impulses as the ultimate truth, and the destruction of logical thought as liberation” (Lukács 1980). These diagnoses find a parallel in Stoyanov, who translates their philosophical sensibility into the language of literary reflection.

The privileged position of Tzvetan Stoyanov, who has been a research associate at the Institute for Contemporary Social Theories at the Presidium of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences since 1969, provides him with unlimited access to Western books and theories that censorship does not allow the public to have access to. In this context, one must also take into account the special position of the Francophones, Anglicists and Germanists, who in those years played the role of mediators between the West and socialist culture. Their work with original texts, terms and languages turns them into agents of sorts through which Western ideas circulate from this side of the Iron Curtain in the form of translation, criticism or commentary. It is precisely in this translational mode of thinking that Tzvetan Stoyanov, who speaks the language of freedom while testifying to its absences, is situated.

Paradoxically, it is precisely the books that directly examine Bulgarian youth – “Self-Portrait of the Generation”, compiled by Philip Panayotov and “Psychology of the Tape-Recorded Youth” by Julian Vuchkov – that fail to explicate authentic models through which the young person can think about his place in the world. Their collectivist morality and Komsomol pathos prove sterile in relation to individual subjectivity. In this respect, it is Tzvetan Stoyanov, examining Western society, who provides a language and a spectrum of unfamiliar practices and concepts through which the young person from the Eastern Bloc can think (or at least dream) about his own escape – literally and figuratively. In the form of strategic negation, his criticism becomes a discreet form of knowledge and a way of conveying objective information in conditions of censorship. In this sense, the essay *Outsiders and Refugees* is both an ideologically sound criticism of the Western world, but also an intellectual breakthrough in the attempt to think freely in non-free time.

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