

Summary of doctoral dissertation

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Topic: Utopia and Fantasy in the Works of Thaddeus Bulgarin (1789-1859)

This dissertation examines the utopian and fantasy works of Thaddeus Bulgarin (1789-1859), a publisher, literary critic, writer, journalist, and member of numerous 19th-century literary societies. Bulgarin was a man of many talents and creative skills.

Unfortunately, thus far, his achievements have been mainly studied by historians and political scientists and only to a small degree by literary scholars. Polish readers know very little of Bulgarin's literary work; he is mainly recognized for his picaresque novel *Ivan Vejeeghen* (Russian: Иван Вѣжигин) and his publishing activity. However, neither utopia nor fantasy has sparked much interest on the part of literary critics. The following dissertation analyzes both literary genres in the context of the remaining fields of Thaddeus Bulgarin's activity.

To attain the dissertation's goal, a specific methodology was adopted involving philological analysis and interpretation – particularly *Explication de Texte*, as well as hermeneutics and comparative literary studies. These approaches enable researching and analyzing the world envisaged and portrayed by the author in the works under scrutiny. These methods also allow juxtaposing the selected works with similar literary pieces created before and with works penned by Bulgarin in Russia around the same time. Methodological considerations are featured in the *Introduction* to this dissertation, accompanied by the state of research, the hypothesis, goals, and introductory information. The dissertation comprises four chapters.

The first chapter is entitled *The Creative Path of Thaddeus Bulgarin (1789-1859)*. It opens with the author's bio – a historical background demonstrating the life of this thesis's subject. The chapter examines the intricacies related to the reception of his works and his personal life. Namely, Thaddeus Venediktovich Bulgarin, also known as Faddiej Bułgarin, Jan Tadeusz Krzysztof Bułharyn, or Jan Tadeusz Bułharyn, was Polish by birth, but he underwent complete denationalization and cultural assimilation into the Russian nation. As a result, he abandoned the Polish language in his works, became an eager subject to the Russian authorities, and continued his writing in the language of the country he chose as his motherland – Russia.

Suspended between Poland and Russia, he failed to gain recognition in the land of his ancestors or in the tsars' empire. To Poles, he was a traitor who chose to serve the tsarist regime; to Russians, he was a "stranger," claiming the right to their privileges. In the first chapter, he is portrayed on three different layers of his activity as a: *publisher, literary critic, and writer*.

The second chapter, *Towards Utopia and Fantasy*, is dedicated to the historical and theoretical-literary analysis of utopia and fantasy genres in Europe and Russia before the 19th century. The third chapter, entitled *The Poetics of the Presented World of Bulgarin's Utopia and Fantasy*, entirely focuses on the utopian and fantasy works of Bulgarin, subject to analysis in this dissertation. The analysis encompasses the following works: *Probable Tall-Tales or Travels Around the World in the 29th Century* (*Правдоподобные небылицы, или Странствование по свету в XXIX веке*) (1824), *Improbable Tall-Tales or a Journey to the Earth's Core* (*Невероятные небылицы, или Путешествие к средоточию Земли*) (1825), *A Scene From Private Life in the Year 2028 After the Birth of Christ* (*Сцена из частной жизни, в 2028 году, от Рождества Христова*) (1828), *The Ancestor and the Descendants* (*Предок и потомки*) (1830), *A Letter From an Inhabitant of Comet Biela to an Inhabitant of the Earth* (*Письмо жителя кометы Белы к жителю Земли*) (1832), *A Letter From a Female Inhabitant of Comet Biela to the Same Inhabitant of the Earth* (*Письмо жительницы кометы Белы, к тому же самому жителю Земли*) (1832), *A Conversation in the Kingdom of the Dead* (*Разговор в царстве мертвых*) (1834), *The Cabalist* (*Кабалистик*) (1834), *Three Notes From a Madhouse, or the Healing of an Incurable Mental Illness* (*Три листка из дома сумасшедших, или Психическое исцеление неизлечимой болезни*) (1834), *The Adventures of Mitrofanuschka on the Moon. The Ramblings of a Non-sleeping Man* (*Похождения Митрофанушки в Луне. Бред не спящего человека*) (1837). The poetics of the examined works has been analyzed in two streams: *Time and Space* and *The Narrator and the Reader*.

The structure of the fourth chapter, *The Presented World in Thaddeus Bulgarin's Utopia and Fantasy*, was dictated by the vital considerations recurring in the presented world of the analyzed literary pieces. The following categories have been accounted for: *society, human and non-humans, technological progress, ethics, philosophy, and mythology*. It was also crucial to demonstrate the real or alleged relationship between the utopian-fantasy works of Bulgarin with similar works created in Russia by his contemporaries. The results of the analysis are presented in the last chapter of this dissertation, entitled *The Dialogue Between Utopia and Fantasy in Thaddeus Bulgarin's Works and the Russian Utopian and Fantasy Literature*.

The conducted analyses have demonstrated that the negative opinion about the artistic value of Bulgarin's works, repeated zealously by many historians, does not reflect the state of

being. Such an unfair treatment of his works can naturally stem from Bulgarin's peculiar position in 19th-century Russia. However, another equally important factor that influenced his rather low reputation as an author in the world of literature was the lack of interest in his role as a writer. Meanwhile, upon close reading, Bulgarin appears to be a gifted and very inventive writer. He was equal to his contemporaries when it came to understanding of the literary context of his epoch, and he applied this knowledge very skillfully. The specific features of Bulgarin's utopian and fantasy literary works prove that he remains suspended between the literary periods of Enlightenment and Romanticism (according to the Polish literary tradition). Nevertheless, some of his ideas significantly surpassed his era. In some works, he proves himself a visionary, not unlike Jules Verne, who popularized ideas similar to Bulgarin nearly forty years later. The conducted research has shown that the same person who remained one of the most acknowledged journalists in Russia over a period of nearly forty years also deserves to be duly recognized as a 19th-century creator of utopia and fantasy.

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