

SOFIA UNIVERSITY 'ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI'

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

**DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY SCIENCE, SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION
AND CULTURAL POLICY**

STANDPOINT

Contest for the position of Associate professor in the research field/subject area
3.5. Communication and Information Sciences /Book studies, library studies,
bibliography - History of the book/.

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For the contest for Associate professor, announced in SG no. 92 of 18.11.2022, there is one candidate appeared and it is Valentina Milchova Mitkova, already an established member of the LSSICP department. Currently she is a chief assistant. V. Mitkova has a rich professional biography - she worked in the field of energy efficiency and water resources management, as well as in the Embassy of PR China in Bulgaria. She has attended several schools for additional qualifications and has a remarkable linguistic background – she is fluent in English, German, Greek and Serbian, which enables her to do a comparative analysis of different authentic texts. She is also a skilled translator of scientific literature. In addition, she takes important courses /lectures and exercises/ from the program of the specialty such as "Manuscript traditions in the history of books and reading"; "Printed books and reading /XV – XX Century/"; "History of the book"; "Local knowledge"; "Gender hierarchies in the field of intellectual activities"; "Gender and Popular Culture in Comparative Perspective," etc.

In the current competition for associate professor, V. Mitkova participated with thirteen studies and articles, most of them in English, which is a very good trend for a future associate professor. Among them, I will single out some titles in Bulgarian such as "The Women's Social Democratic Press and the Ideas for the Emancipation of Bulgarian Women Reflected in It"; "Bulgarian "female" literature and the specifics of its critical reception" and "Against the canonical pressure to write "femininely": Bulgarian female authors and the subject of war", as they all deal with the issues of female authorship and its undervaluation and belittling in patriarchal frameworks of Bulgarian society once, and it will not be an exaggeration to say - and now. The observations and conclusions from these studies on the intellectual and creative activity of Bulgarian women writers are very accurate, supported by voluminous factual material. They emphasize the considerable effort to create a new, gender-sensitive intellectual and socio-cultural environment that will support the development of all Bulgarian women, in this case the readers and users of women's newspapers and magazines.

The emphasis in my opinion is on the habilitation work of the author - "Gender, periodical printing and modernization in Bulgaria from the end of the 19th to the 40s of the 20th century" /University Press, 2022/. The work, above all, provides a huge factual and bibliographic material for future large-scale studies, conclusions and generalizations, which concern not only women, but also reading in general in Bulgaria, of which the female share is very large. In it, new research paths are sought for the follow-up of the Bulgarian literary and journalistic processes in the context of the Balkan ones. The aspiration to build a more complete and, above all, denser picture of the desire, generally speaking, for the Europeanization of the Bulgarian

intellectual reality from before the end of the Second World War is clearly expressed. In fact, the habilitation is another attempt in Bulgarian humanitarian studies to overcome the androcentric model in the interpretation of the Bulgarian civilizational efforts for transformation and modernization of the country as a whole. The author very precisely defines her study as a study of "a field in which women's collective identities are constructed and reconstructed." I see the main contributions of the habilitation summarized in the following main points:

- Bulgarian women's periodicals are fully understood in their role as a forum for discussing alternative interpretations of women's identities, interests and needs; of creating women's own narratives.
- For the first time, an attempt was made to typologize women's periodicals based on the prevailing suggestions in their editorial policies. They are divided into two large groups - those with a clearly stated feminist profile and the so-called "domestic" /considered by the author as "relational feminists"/, which in turn contribute to the modernization of everyday life in the Bulgarian home and to the social and personal awareness of the Bulgarian woman. As representatives of the first group, they are analyzed in "Prosperity"; "The Dissatisfied"; "Women's Labor" magazine, "Grazhdanka" magazine; Equality, Women's Voice and Women's World. The second group includes "Bulgarka" magazine; "Fashion and Household"; "Economy and Household" and "Journal of the Woman". We cannot fail to note that the latter have a much longer life and a wider distribution. V. Mitkova's typology is a working model, but it should still be taken into account here that it is rare to find a pure version of a newspaper or magazine, entirely sustained in one spirit.
- A successful comparative analysis was made with other Balkan periodicals, similar in spirit to the Bulgarian ones - Serbian, Greek and Turkish.
- Studies on female authorship are very important, because they help to reconstruct female literary history. Women's periodical printing is placed in the context of the modern era and modernism in general.
- Some key manifestations of women's intellectual creative activity are examined, placed in the broad framework of world women's achievements.

- The work successfully problematizes and formulates the rules of the Bulgarian patriarchal existence, in which women writers fight for their place, against the gender hierarchy, against gender "guardianship" and attempts to belittle women's creative successes, as well as against, roughly speaking, the "pushing" of women into certain boundaries and topics. It would be good, of course, in the future to consider the issue of female authors publishing in the "male" periodical press.

- In her conclusion, the researcher rightly points out that she has proven the great role of the women's periodical press for the emancipation and cultural shaping of the worldview of the Bulgarian woman. Women's newspapers and magazines, to which thousands of women subscribe, try to create an alternative space in which women are active participants - authors, translators, compilers - in other words, political and civil subjects, re-conceptualizing their existence. In this part of her presentation, the author casts a cursory glance at the socialist magazines with women's themes - "Lada" and "The Woman Today", which was not explicitly necessary, especially since both publications are in fact precisely in the spirit of patriarchal Bulgarian backwardness, which we very often have to face even today.

In conclusion of my short remarks /because much more can be said about Valentina Mitkova's research and activities/, I believe that she has all the qualities to occupy the position of "associate professor" in the BNICP department, where she will be of great benefit in the preparation of the future librarians, information specialists and researchers of the history of books and reading. I allow myself to confidently recommend to the Scientific Jury to award her the title of "associate professor" in direction 3.5. – Public communications and information sciences.

Standpoint prepared by:

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