

STATEMENT

concerning: competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, professional field 3.5 Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book Science, Library Science, Bibliography - History of Book), published in the State Gazette, no. 92 of 18.11.2022.

by Prof. Dr. Ana Georgieva Luleva, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with the Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, member of the scientific jury by Order No-38637/09.12.2022 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

One candidate participates in the competition: Dr. Valentina Milchova Mitkova

According to the submitted reference for fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Article 26 of the Academic Staff Development Act of the Republic of Bulgaria (ASDA) and the Regulations on the Conditions and Procedure for Acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", the candidate meets the conditions for participation in the competition. The minimum national requirements for the respective scientific field and the additional requirements of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for obtaining the academic position "Associate Professor" have been met and the indicators for publications and citations far exceed the accepted minimum.

Chief Assistant Prof. Dr. Valentina Mitkova teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of "Library Science, Scientific Information and Cultural Policy", giving lectures and exercises in two scientific fields - "History of Book" and "History of Women and Gender". In these fields she has also developed her research interests, successfully exploring the intersection between them, namely by doing in-depth research on book and periodical publishing through the lens of gender and women's writing. Consistently, in a number of articles, the author addresses particular issues of women's writing, gender aspects of book history, women's periodical press, etc.

Her long-standing research has been synthesized in the monograph "Gender, Periodical Printing and Modernization in Bulgaria (from the late 19th to the 1940s)", Sofia, 2022, University Press "Sv. Kliment Ochridski. The monograph is a fundamental work on women's periodical press in the mentioned historical period.

Sharing feminist and gender-sensitive positions, the author aims "to trace the way in which the periodical press, addressed to the female reading public in Bulgaria from the late nineteenth to the 1940s, contributed to the emancipation and cultural modernization of the female sex." The key concepts defining the macro frame of the study are "modernization", „emancipation“, „literary feminism“.

Two groups of publications are analyzed - feminist and representatives of the leftist press, and household press. Valentina Mitkova argues that "the Bulgarian women's periodical press from the late nineteenth to the 1940s shared the common cause of turning Bulgarian women into active participants in the construction of the modern (European) image of the country, for a tangible transformation of public attitudes towards the so-called women's question and the emancipation of the female sex". Combining in her research the approaches of both fields - history of the book and history of women and gender, Valentina Mitkova succeeds in bringing women's literature and women creators of literature out of their marginal position and making them visible to the Bulgarian reader.

The first chapter ("Women's Periodicals in the Context of Contemporary Feminist Studies") sets the theoretical and historiographical context of the study - it outlines the historical consideration of women's writing as marginal, secondary, inferior to men's and reflecting gender hierarchies in society and presents the main authors and theses of feminist criticism. In this context, the theses of the Bulgarian researchers of women's writing are commented upon; the historiography of women's literary activity in the period under consideration is reviewed and the problem of women's periodical press in the modern era is raised by tracing its development in the Western research tradition and in feminist studies in Southeastern Europe (using Serbia, Greece and Turkey as examples). This chapter contains valuable comments and is a good introduction to the author's own research.

Chapter Two, entitled "The Women's Periodical Press in the Context of Bulgarian Modernisation", illuminates the interest in the so-called "women's question" and literary feminism from the mid-19th century onwards. The views of prominent men of the Renaissance period on women's education and role, of women writers of the same period and their

participation in national causes as educators - teachers and activists of charitable societies are outlined. The second part of this chapter provides an elaboration of the place of women and gender asymmetries in the nation-state institutions of education, science, culture and political citizenship. The birth of modern Bulgarian feminism, the specificity of the Bulgarian women's movement and the dominant discourses on the nature of women and their place in public life are thematized in this context. The narrative of the development of the Bulgarian periodical press as a modern form of publicity and, more specifically, of the women's periodical press in post-liberation Bulgaria is situated within the picture thus sketched. The author makes a typology of women's periodicals aimed at women and with women editors and publishers, following Karen Offen's terminology - "publications with a clearly stated 'individualist' feminist discourse and women's newspapers and magazines consciously avoiding overt politicization, labeled as 'domestic'" (p. 105), "relational feminist" .

In the third chapter ("Women's Periodicals in Bulgaria from 1878 to the 1940s: Strategies for the Modernization and Emancipation of Bulgarian Women") the author's own contribution to analysis of the women's press in the studied period is made. The explicitly feminist publications - "Zhenskiy Svet" (1893-1898), "Zhenskiy Glas" (1899/1901-1944), "Ravnopravie" (1908-1911/1914), "Grazhdanka" (1911-1912), "Women's Work" (1904-1905), "Blagodenstvie" (1921-1924), and "Nedovolnata" (1931), and the household (relational-feminist) publications - "Balgarka" (1896-1904), "Moda I domakinstvo" (1897-1906) are analyzed. The picture of women's household press between the two world wars is very well presented.

The Conclusion summarizes the author's findings on the contribution of women's periodicals to the emancipation and cultural modernization of Bulgarian women from the late nineteenth to the 1940s. On the basis of the analysis of the selected publications - their content, editorial policy and reception, Valentina Mitkova shows that women's publications of the late 19th and the first four decades of the 20th century had the greatest importance for the emancipation of women. They are "united in their aspiration to turn Bulgarian women into active participants in the construction of the modern (European) image of the country and to tangibly change public attitudes towards the so-called women's question" (219); they had the potential and had a transformative impact on the construction of women's collective identities. The author also casts a bridge to the next historical period, that of state socialism, by outlining the emergence of the new women's magazines "Woman Today" and "Lada", created in place of the liquidated free women's press.

Valentina Mitkova's book has achieved its goal: by combining the approaches of the two fields, the history of books and reading and the history of women and gender, through successful contextualization and appropriate referencing to relevant world literature, the author has succeeded in showing the place of women's periodicals in the modernizing Bulgarian society and its transformative potential. In doing so, she makes a valuable contribution to Bulgarian historical scholarship from a gender perspective - an achievement that is still rare.

Dr. Valentina Mitkova's publications are original and contributive, with no evidence of plagiarism. In all of them the author reveals herself as an erudite and very promising scientist.

All the findings so far give me full grounds to give a positive assessment of the scientific achievements of Chief Asist. Dr. Valentina Mitkova and to vote "for" her election to the academic position of Associate Professor in the professional field 3.5 Public Communications and Information Sciences (Book Science, Library Science, Bibliography - History of the Book),

26.03.2023

Prof. Dr. Ana Luleva

Sofia