

RESEARCH GROUP
BULGARIAN LITERARY HISTORY

RESEARCH AREA
BULGARIAN LITERATURE

LITERARY HISTORY IN THE 21st CENTURY: GLOBAL MODELS AND BULGARIAN PRACTICES

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The need to rethink the traditional model of writing literary history was being discussed as early as the 90's of the 20th century – in practice however this only happened after the beginning of the new century. At that time important problems of epistemological and methodological nature begin to emerge: the essentialism of traditional literary historiography; the teleological approach, evaluating the past from the point of view of the victorious present; chronological linearity; the romantic approach to phenomena depending on the degree of their "importance"; the nationalist focus underlying the "grand narrative", etc. Attempts are being made to theoretically rethink the categories in which the literary-historical process is considered. Alternative models such as "world literature", "Eurasian literature" and others are being developed – self-described with categories such as globalism or multinationalism, such models account for living in an ever-expanding space of diasporas around the world. Even among those researchers who do not speak of a complete "deconstruction of the epistemological field", there is already an attitude of thinking about literary historiography under the sign of some urgent change that would make it relevant to the contemporary mentality and attractive for use in the wider cultural space.

The goals and methods of the current project (contract № 70- 123-447 from 27.06.2023) are developed in the dynamic and diverse context of an upsurge in the making of literary history, and precisely in the field of "big histories", which cover entire eras of Bulgaria's development. Until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there was only one "big history" suitable for educational use after 1989, "History of Bulgarian Literature 1878 – 1944" by Sv. Igov, as well as one attempt to modernize the approach: "Bulgarian literature of the 20th century" (2003) by V. Stefanov. In the next ten years, a number of new projects appeared with authors Pl. Doinov, M. Nedelchev, M. Kirova, V. Stefanov, collectives from NBU and from IL-BAS. Despite their public existence, which fills an open empty niche, a serious dialogue on theoretical foundations and methodological models does not take place. The current project is aiming at the initiation of a broader debate: about the principles and manners in which literary history can be written, in such a way as to be adequate to the needs and attitudes in the modern man's thinking. This is definitely not a question of dismantling the tradition accumulated in Bulgarian humanitarian studies over a period of a century and a half, nor is it a matter of direct transfer of "global", "Eurasian" and other similar theories. In our opinion, the necessary changes should not mean a rejection of national specificity or a disregard for the intermediate, cross-border processes and forms characteristic of Bulgarian literature's historical development. The second key task of the current project is the development of hypothetical models for making literary histories that respect "glocal" principles and practices in a relatively balanced way.



Part of the members of the group

Head of the research group
Assoc. Prof. Noemi Stoichkova
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Prof. Milena Kirova
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OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The specific research objectives of the project are:

- Theoretical.** To study and evaluate, in view of their applicability to Bulgarian culture, the new theoretical models that Western literary studies have developed and implemented as a literary-historical practice in the 21st century.
 - Analyzing.** To define and evaluate the approaches of writing literary history within the boundaries of Bulgarian literature in the 20th–21st centuries.
 - Heuristic.** To develop and propose optimal variants that may achieve conformity and balance between European (in this sense, global) developed models and Bulgarian approaches to the writing (respectively teaching) of literary history.
- The methodologies for the research objectives are:
- Cultural-historical** – the study of the cultural contexts embedded in the making of literary histories.
 - Literary-theoretical** – (in)applicability of modern theoretical models for the development of national literary histories.
 - Literary-historical** – systematization, analysis and debate of the existing Bulgarian literary histories from the last 20 years.
 - Comparativist** – comparing foreign and native traditions in the writing of literary histories in the last century.
 - Receptive** – tracing the perceptive attitudes towards the different types of literary histories from the beginning of the XXI century.
 - Pedagogical** – specialized training of students from the Faculty of Slavic Studies in the various literary and historical projects.



The project website is regularly being updated with info on current objectives and events

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCES

The project "Literary Histories in the 21st Century: Global Models and Bulgarian Practices" (contract № 70-123-447 from 27.06.2023) has successfully expanded and deepened its research on the topic in its second phase. Out of the five publications planned for the two-year period in journals indexed in Web of Science, all five have already been published in the first year. Out of the three publications intended to be indexed in Web of Science for the second period, two have been published by the end of 2024. Additionally, there are 12 more articles in other peer-reviewed journals, published between April and December 2024. During the same timeframe, the team participated in three international conferences and three national conferences.



At a Literary Conference in Bucharest

LITERARY HISTORY TODAY: NATIONAL PRACTICES AND GLOBAL TRENDS

A roundtable entitled "Literary History Today: National Practices and Global Trends" was held in November. Its objective was to advance the discussion in the subsequent thematic coordinates: the Bulgarian literary historiographic traditions and the position of traditional literary history in today's context; the changes undergone in the humanities in the last thirty years and the potential new directions of our century; the different literary history concepts, published in Bulgaria since 1989, the methodological goals, theory approaches, and functional targets; and potential frameworks for an optimum model of literary history to be applied in Bulgarian literary studies in the 21st century. The roundtable was joined by 15 scholars from different institutions: Faculty of Slavic Philology at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Literary Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, New Bulgarian University, and Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and Methodius." A transcript of the discussion, as well as the written texts submitted following the debate, has been published on the Project's website:

<https://histlit21.wordpress.com/resources/>



At the "Literary History Today: National Practices And Global Trends" Roundtable

CURRENT PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Throughout the reporting period, Prof. Milena Kirova, Assoc. Prof. Noemi Stoichkova and Senior Asst. Prof. Kristina Yordanova worked on a model for bibliographing literary-historical research since the end of the 19th century up to the present, and a team of PhD candidates and students gathered and prepared bibliographic descriptions of literary histories of the past 150 years. Their editing and loading onto the Project's site are in progress.

Since the beginning of February of this year, preparations have also been underway for a discussion on "Modern Approaches to Teaching Literary History in Secondary Schools", involving young teachers who are alumni of the Faculty of Slavic Philology, which will take place in late April.

For additional info visit:

- Project website
<https://histlit21.wordpress.com>
- Project Facebook page
www.facebook.com/histlit21