

## OPINION

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For Amelia Veselinova Licheva’s, PhD (Faculty of Literary Theory at Sofia University “Saint Kliment Ochridski”) doctoral dissertation titled *Is Nobel Global?*

Professor Amelia Licheva’s dissertation *Is Nobel Global?* for the academic title Doctor of Philology consists of three chapters (World Literature at the Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, The Nobel Prize, Contemporary World Literature: Worlds, Messages, Prognoses) with multiple subchapters, introduction, conclusion, appendix, and bibliography. The dissertation contains 282 pages and although considerably shorter, the dissertation synopsis adequately and proportionally presents the study’s main ideas.

Interdisciplinary in its nature, the dissertation combines analytical approaches from several disciplines: comparative literature, literary theory, literary history, literary criticism, and theory and practice of translation. The major themes Dr. Licheva explores are comparative literature, the concept “world literature,” and the prestigious world/international literary awards. To a certain degree, the appendix devoted to the unfulfilled Bulgarian longing for a Nobel Prize, engages the same themes. Although the origin, the development and controversies around the concept “world literature” are presented diachronically, the analysis focuses on 21<sup>st</sup> century world literary events.

The dissertation *Is Nobel Global?* was probably completed in 2018 when two curious events related to the prestigious award happened: the release and the Oscar nomination of Björn Runge’s film adaptation of Мер Уолицър’ eponymous novel *The Wife* and the decision of the

Nobel Academy to cancel the literary award in 2018. These very different events together and independently reveal the public and the invisible for the public eye work of the Nobel prize jury. Amelia Licheva's dissertation lies at intersection of the above mentioned public/non-public perspectives by documenting the current state of affairs of the Award. She demonstrates the intertwinement of literary comparatism with the theoretical contemplation of the concept "world literature." She asks the question: what makes a literary work global?: the plot line (in the case of *The Wife*, the engaging Jewish family stories of the husband) or its masterful literary execution (by the wife). Licheva also raises the questions of the linguistic and cultural translatability of literary works and demonstrates the theoretical potential of literary comparatism. Inasmuch as world literature and the academic discipline comparative literature are interconnected, literary theory and criticism legitimize and objectify world literature. Or if we go back to *The Wife* and the 2018 cancelation of the literary award and their connection to Licheva's dissertation: because of the resignations of several academy members, the Nobel Prize was cancelled in 2018 (despite the very strong nominees).

The dissertation also shows the increasing role of political factors in the selection process. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, world literature resembles the world wide web (www) which has irreversibly changed the traditional understanding of center and periphery and in her dissertation Amelia Licheva explores the revisiting of the different kinds of centrisms: eurocentrism, americentrism, etc. She also shows how migration contributes to changes in the literary interests and literary taste. If the Nobel Prize of the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1905 (for his novel *Quo Vadis*) was a reminder that all roads, including literary, lead to Rome, Svetlana Alexeevich's award 110 years later transformed the Belorussian-Ukrainian periphery into a center thanks to the universal themes of her non-fiction prose.

In this light, it is interesting to note that the natural evolution of the concept “world literature” has led to the disappearance of such ethno-geographical terms as “literary community” and “specific literary community” which used to be connecting blocks between the national and world literature. In her analysis of postcolonialism and migration, Professor Licheva transforms the traditional territorial regionalism into immanent which differs from the euro- and americacentric; using writers Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak as examples, Licheva reveals the global nature of their works which is irrespective of their place of origin and living.

An intriguing part of the dissertation is the analysis of the Nobel Prize winners’ speeches through which Amelia Licheva demonstrates that although driven by commercial and opportunistic motivations, the literary awards serve as ethical messages about the present and the future.

The dissertation *Is Nobel Global?* is a mature and well-thought out work, a culmination of Professor Amelia Licheva’s long lasting research interests. Based on the outlined contributions (and many others that were not mentioned), I delightfully and with no hesitation will support the awarding of the scholarly title “Doctor of Philology” to Professor Amelia Licheva, PhD.

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