

## **REVIEW**

**Reviewer:** Prof. Diana Yankova, D.Litt., Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures, New Bulgarian University, Sofia

*Regarding* the selection procedure for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the academic field of "Humanities," professional field 2.1 "Philology", discipline "North American Literature", Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," promulgated in "State Gazette," No. 96/17.11.2023

### **1. Information about the selection procedure**

The selection procedure for associate professor in North American Literature meets all the requirements of the Law and Regulations. The sole candidate, Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova, has submitted all the necessary documents to participate in the selection process and fulfills all the National minimum requirements for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor," according to the Regulation for the Application of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

### **2. Brief information about the applicant**

Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova graduated in English Philology from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" with a minor in Spanish Philology in 1993. Since 2002, she has been working as an assistant at the Department of English and American Studies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," and in 2011, she was reappointed as a senior assistant in the same department. She earned her Ph.D. degree in 2014 after successfully defending a dissertation titled "Issues of Identity and Characteristics of Postmodern Narrative in the Works of Timothy Findley."

### **3. Description of her academic research and contributions**

The applicant has submitted a monograph, *Images of War: American and Canadian Novels of World War II* (Sofia: UNSS Press, 2023), another book based on the defended doctoral dissertation and ten published articles.

The monograph, *Images of War: American and Canadian Novels of World War II*, explores a multifaceted and universal global issue that has been extensively analyzed through the lens of fiction - the theme of war. In this study, consisting of an introduction, conclusion, and four chapters, the author Galina Avramova focuses her attention on five authors and their emblematic works of undeniable artistic value: *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) by Norman Mailer; *Catch-22* (1961) by Joseph Heller; *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut; *A Midnight Clear* (1982) by William Wharton; and *The English Patient* (1992) by Michael Ondaatje.

In the present review in my capacity as a specialist in the field of Canadian studies, I wish to emphasize the Canadian aspects that enrich the depiction of war presented in the examined monograph. Additionally, I would like to underscore the significant contributions of the submitted articles which primarily focus on Canadian identity, culture, and literature.

In Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient*, the reflection of Canadian values and concerns is particularly evident through the prism of war and complex human relationships. Canadian identity, enriched cultural mosaic, and the unique history of the country intertwine within the context of the novel. As a nation with deep traditions in seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts, Canada finds its reflection in the novel through its characteristic values. War is portrayed as something incomplete and transitory, in contrast to Canada's pursuit of peace and justice. Through the characters and their relationships, Ondaatje explores how war transforms and tests human nature.

The theme of identity is also expressed in the novel through the character of *The English Patient*. His uncertainty and lack of a specific national belonging reflect identification concerns still relevant in contemporary Canadian society. The portrayal of Canada as a multicultural and multiethnic nation is also evident in the character of the Indian sapper, Kip Singh. Despite his Indian identity, he finds himself in Italy during World War II, serving as a symbol of multiculturalism in the context of the portrayal of the Other, a concept entirely characteristic of the Canadian landscape. Singh hangs above the water with mud-caked hands, experiencing the boundary between different cultures and civilizations amid the battlefields and destruction of Italy.

The Indian sapper confronts the divide between culture and barbarism in a symbolic moment created by war, emphasizing the multiculturalism as an integral part of the Canadian literary tradition and a theme that explores the impact of war on individual identity and the interaction between different cultural values. This aspect of the novel underscores the importance of diversity and tolerance in moments of cultural and social conflict. All these aspects of *The English Patient* find their identification in the analytical approach of the author, contributing to a deeper understanding of the impact of war on Canadian identity and cultural heritage.

The submitted articles, as well as the book based on Galina Avramova's doctoral dissertation also bring important perspectives to discussions on Canadian culture and identity. The majority of the examined materials adopt postmodernism as a key approach in understanding the Canadian cultural-literary landscape. Postmodernism serves as a theoretical framework through which various aspects of the Canadian cultural and literary scene are studied and analyzed. Each of the articles traces and examines issues of identity, history, and culture, using the postmodern approach as a tool for interpreting and understanding these themes. For instance, "Problematizing History in Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*" analyzes how Timothy Findley utilizes elements such as intertextuality and historiographic metafiction to reevaluate historical events and challenge readers to reconsider their perception of the past.

Through an analysis of the novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage* in *Myth and Meaning in the Postmodern World: A Perspective on Timothy Findley's "Not Wanted on the Voyage"* Avramova examines and argues for the role of postmodernism in destabilizing and undermining traditional myths and truths, reflecting the subjective and multi-layered nature of truth.

The theme of racism in ever-tolerant Canada is the subject of discussion in the article *Racism of a Different Kind: Canadian Multiculturalism in the 21st Century*. It provides a critical perspective on multiculturalism in Canada, using the postmodernist concept to explore the evolution of racism in the country.

These articles, united by the postmodern approach, highlight the complexity of Canadian literature and identity, challenging readers to reconsider established truths and stereotypes in various aspects of life - from literature and history to relationships between cultural groups. In doing so, they enrich the debate and provide additional coherence to the study of the Canadian cultural landscape.

The contribution of the book *Children of Darkness* - the first in-depth study of the works of the prominent Canadian writer Timothy Findley in Bulgarian literary studies, published based on the dissertation of the applicant, encompasses innovative research approaches that unfold the reception of the novel *Pilgrim* in Bulgaria. This includes the development of theoretical frameworks for an adequate analysis of postmodern narrative in Findley's works.

In the subsequent study, *Canadian Cultural Identity: In Search of the Literary Canon*, Galina Avramova highlights that Canadian literature reflects the richness of a young nation, shaped by historical processes and waves of immigration. The article emphasizes that the formation of the Canadian literary canon, guided by poststructuralism, reflects the desire to define identity in an era of globalization and tension between national specificity and universal values.

The topic of the reception of translated Canadian literature in Bulgaria is explored in the article *Timothy Findley: The Canadian Pilgrim in Bulgaria*, outlining the complex interplay between cultural, socio-political, and market factors. The article focuses on the challenge faced by translators in overcoming the cultural differences between Canada and Bulgaria, following the concepts of "cultural transfer" by Flotow and Nishikawa. Overall, Canadian literature, particularly through the influence of authors like Timothy Findley, plays a crucial role in expanding global understanding of Canada's cultural identity.

M.G. Vassanji, a representative of the ethnic diaspora, is another Canadian author who has captured Galina Avramova's attention. The two articles dedicated to him contribute significantly, making his presence in the Canadian literary landscape equally impactful. The analysis of the conflict between identity and the desire for a new way of life presented in the article *Between Memory and Desire: M.G. Vassanji's Novel "No New Land"* substantially enriches the understanding of cultural transformations and immigrant experiences in literature. This study sheds light on the challenges faced by immigrant communities in Canada when establishing a sense of belonging in their new homelands.

The other article in which Dr Avramova explores the multifaceted identities and cultural connections of M.G. Vassanji, titled *Towards a Dynamic Definition of World Literature: The Mosaic of Change in M.G. Vassanji*, is dedicated to his depiction of Africa in his novel *The Magic of Saida*, portraying it as both a national-ethnic and a global entity. The study not only reveals the

aesthetic value of the work but also emphasizes its significance as a transboundary text in the context of interpreting world literature.

I find that the research by Dr. Avramova contributes important perspectives to the discussion of Canadian culture and identity. They not only highlight the complexity of Canadian civilizational belonging but also challenge readers to reconsider established truths and stereotypes in various aspects of life, from literature and history to relationships between cultural groups.

Dr. Avramova's participation in 9 scientific and scientific-applied projects as a participant and as a main researcher should also be noted. She also demonstrates a frequent participation in specialized scientific conferences delivering academic papers.

#### **4. Teaching Experience**

Galina Avramova's teaching experience, covering both undergraduate and graduate levels, stands out for a special interest not only in Canadian literature and culture but also in American literature as part of the broader field of North American cultural studies.

Within the undergraduate program, she has designed lecture courses focused on little-researched topics in the Bulgarian context, such as "Canada: Culture, Society, Policies" and "Multiculturalism in Canadian Literature", which not only contribute to the diversity and relevance of the curriculum, but also provide vistas for learning about Canada's cultural diversity. Also, the classes she teaches on "North American Popular Literature in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries" present an integrated and enriched approach to the study of North American culture and literature.

In the master's program, Dr. Avramova reads the course "Canada: Culture and Literature", which broadens students' academic horizons and introduces them to new perspectives and approaches to the study of North American literature. Her commitment and innovative approach make her an extremely suitable applicant for an associate professorship in the field of North American literature.

#### **5. Recommendations**

I would like to recommend that Dr. Avramova direct her future publications to authoritative Bulgarian and international academic journals and such with a high impact factor. It is also advised that she present her research at international scientific fora more often. On the one hand, this will

offer her the possibility to make her work known to a wider audience, and on the other, provide an opportunity for approval and feedback, so needed by every researcher.

## **6. Conclusion**

All critical comments and recommendations in no way underestimate the immense work of the applicant in his teaching, his research and the results achieved. Based on Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova's accomplishments, I recommend to the esteemed Academic Council that Galina Avramova be selected for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.1. "Philology", "North American literature".

20.02.2024

Signed: