**REVIEW**

**By Professor Madeleine Danova, PhD**

**for**

**the competition for Associate Professor in the field of the 2. Humanities,**

**scholarly area 2.1 Philology (North American literature – in English),**

**Department of English and American Studies,**

**Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology**

**Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",**

**announced in the *State Gazette*, no. 96/17.11.2023**

**1/ Competition data**

The announced competition for an Associate Professor of North American literature meets all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its Implementation, as well as the Rules for the Terms and Conditions for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University. No procedural violations have been found. The only candidate, Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova, has submitted all the necessary documents for participation in the competition.

**2/ Data about the candidate**

Galina Avramova graduated in English philology in 1993 at the English and American Studies Department of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. In 1998, she started working as an Assistant-Professor in the Department of Western Languages at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologiy, SU, and in 2002 she was appointed as a Senior Assistant-Professor in the Department of English and American Studies. In 2011, she was reappointed as the Chief Assistant-Professor in the same department and was enrolled as a doctoral student of independent training at the Department of Theory of Literature at the Faculty of Slavic Philology, where in 2014 she defended her dissertation on the topic "Problems of identity and peculiarities of the postmodern narrative in Timothy Findley" and received the educational and scientific degree "doctor", which is also the first doctoral degree in Canadian studies at Sofia University. She teaches courses in Canadian culture and literature and in American literature in both the department's undergraduate and graduate programs.

Galina Avramova submitted a Certificate of fulfillment of the minimum national requirements under Art. 2B, para. 2 and 3 of the Law with the relevant evidence, from which it is clear that according to the indicators from Group A with a minimum required 50 points, she has 50 points, according to the indicators from Group B, with a minimum required 100 points, she has 100 items, according to the indicators from Group D, with a minimum required 200 points, she has 210 points and according to the indicators from Group E, with a minimum required 50 points, she has 50 points, a total of 410 points at min. required 400 points. Based on the above, it is clear that Galina Avramova fully meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

**3/ Description of scholarly works**

Galina Avramova participates in the competition with a monograph, *Images of War: American and Canadian Novels About the Second World War* (IC UNSS, Sofia, 2023), one book, *Children of Darkness: Timothy Findley's novel Pilgrim* (St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofia, 2019), published on the basis of the defended dissertation and ten articles, studies, and chapters from collective monographs devoted to American and Canadian literatures and cultures.

The monograph *Images of War: American and Canadian World War II Novels* presents a broad and in-depth study of the theme of war in the work of one of arguably the greatest names in the war novel from the second half of the twentieth century in American and world literature, Norman Mailer , Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut, as well as in the works of William Wharton and the Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje. The novels under analysis are also some of the masterpieces of this genre, *The Naked and the Dead*, 1948, *Catch 22*, 1961, *Slaughterhouse 5*, 1969, *A Midnight* *Clear*, 1982 and *The English Patient*, 1992.Thus Galina Avramova manages to capture the changing attitudes and outlook from the end of the Second World War, through the turbulent sixties to the end of the twentieth century.

The study is structured as an analysis of several main narratives that build the image of war in these works - "war as a crisis", "the army - pathos, hypocrisy, absurdity", "alternatives of peaceful life" and "roads of salvation", as these are also the titles of the individual chapters. Based on an in-depth literary analysis, Galina Avramova traces the theme of war as a basis for building the "complex picture of human existence" (p.143), connecting the novels of North American writers with the historical dynamics of war and the critical reflections on war in world criticism and literature to show the universality of this theme (p.26), concluding the study with the idea that human civilization has not yet gone its way to eliminating the suffering and death that war brings.

An interesting perspective in this study is the inclusion of the Canadian perspective of a writer, Michael Ondaatje, who, although he grew up in a different cultural environment and rarely writes works that are directly related to Canada, manages to present the typical Canadian worldview of multi-layeredness and depth of cultural self-awareness and building tolerance for "otherness". What unites these novels, which are so diverse in terms of their genre characteristics, turns out to be precisely this indestructible human striving for goodness, for the "better angels" of our own nature. Galina Avramova manages to discuss this search for an identity by the characters of these novels, which does not submit to the absurdity of war and manages to preserve itself regardless of the suffering and traumas that war causes.

The problems of the ambiguous identity of the postmodern man is a main theme in the articles and studies with which Galina Avramova participates in the competition, as well as in the book published on the basis of her PhD dissertation. They can be broadly grouped into two parts - those devoted to Canadian cultural identity and Canadian multiculturalism such as the articles "Canadian Cultural Identity: In Search of the Literary Canon", "Issues of Identity and Features of Postmodern Narrative in Timothy Findley" and "Racism of Another Type: Canadian Multiculturalism in the 21st Century", and those that present a more global approach in analyzing literary works such as "Toward a Dynamic Definition of World Literature: M. G. Vassanji's Mosaic of Change”, “Myth and Meaning in the Post-Modern World: A Glimpse at Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*”, 'Between Memory and Desire: M. G. Vassanji's novel *No New Land*', 'Is Harry Potter Dangerous?' and "On the Trail of a Fairy Tale: Tolkien's Novel *The Lord of the Rings*."

In all the articles presented by the candidate, we also see a deeply critical look at postmodern writing, which problematizes history by overturning the "grand narratives of modernity" to present us with an alternative history that often turns into endless mirror reflections that give rise to ever new meanings and representations.

**4/ Contributions**

From the above, it is clear that one of the main contributions of Galina Avramova is the critical presentation to the academic audience on the one hand of some of the most significant figures of contemporary Canadian literature such as Timothy Findlay, M. G. Vasanji and Michael Ondaatje and on the other - the research and the critical rethinking of some of the most painful themes of modernity such as war, suffering, pain and death, and the power of the human spirit and imagination to create alternative worlds in which people can preserve the good. The in-depth study of literary works from American and Canadian literature, which Galina Avramova offers us, reveals the fragility of constructed identities and the deep rifts in the collective unconscious of modern society.

The two monographs and articles are proof of the accumulated experience in the comparative studies of different cultural and intellectual contexts that characterize contemporary North American societies, which Galina Avramova has built up over the years and has helped her establish herself as one of the leading researchers in North American literature in our country. This is particularly evident in the presented monograph, which is an example of a skillful handling of texts from different cultures and eras united around a universal theme.

**5/ Teaching and project activity**

Galina Avramova's teaching work largely reflects her scientific pursuits and preferences. The elective courses she has created and taught in Canadian Studies and Popular American Literature are sought after by students because they open up new fields of study and research into the Anglophone societies of North America. Currently, she leads three elective courses dedicated to Canadian culture and literature, and the seminar classes of the mandatory course in American literature, and has already started the development of the lecture course in American literature for the students of the binary majors with English language at Sofia University. Particularly popular among students is the course on popular American literature, which Dr. Avramova has led since its inception.

Galina Avramova is also very actively involved in research projects, both university and international, and she is also a very active member of the Bulgarian Association of Canadian Studies and the Central European Association of Canadian Studies. He is also a member of the Bulgarian Association for American Studies, as well as the Bulgarian Society for British Studies. Galina Avramova is also an active member of the editorial boards of several scientific journals and editor of scientific collections and collective monographs.

**6/ Conclusion**

In conclusion, and based on the above, I can confidently state that the candidate meets all the necessary requirements for this academic position, and I recommend to the esteemed jury to choose Dr. Galina Avramova as Associate Professor of North American Literature.

Professor Madeleine Danova, PhD