

EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

Concerning the Appointment of an Associate Professor in English Literature Since 1945 and Translation

- Area of higher education: 2. Humanities
- Area of professional specialization: 2.1. Philology (English Literature Since 1945 and Translation)

Examiner: Prof. Lyudmila (Ludmilla) Kostova, PhD, St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

Information Concerning Angel Igov's Candidacy:

Dr Angel Igov is the only candidate for the position of Associate Professor in English Literature Since 1945 and Translation. The position was advertised by Sofia University in the *State Gazette*, issue 103 (12.12.2023). The candidate has submitted all necessary documents.

Information Concerning the Candidate:

Dr Angel Igov received his BA degree in English and American Studies (English Philology) from Sofia University in 2005, followed by an MA in 2007. In 2012, having successfully presented and defended his thesis, *Fictional Models of the City in the Contemporary British novel (Ian McEwan and Martin Amis)*, he received his PhD from the same university. The thesis was supervised by Assoc. Prof. Ognyan Kovachev, PhD. While working on his doctoral thesis, the candidate was awarded a Fulbright grant which enabled him to do research the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr Igov is currently Senior Lecturer at the Department of English and American Studies, Sofia University, where he teaches a variety of English

literature and translation courses at BA and MA level. In 2023, he began teaching the course “English Literature: From Modernism to Postmodernism,” which is relevant to his present candidature for the position of Associate Professor.

In addition, Igov is a novelist and short story writer, and is also active as a literary translator from English to Bulgarian. He likewise has experience as a journalist and a radio host. One of his novels and two of his literary translations have been awarded prestigious prizes.

Description of the Candidate’s Research Interests and Publications

Judging by the publications he has submitted, the candidate’s major areas of research and expertise include comparative literature (particularly, comparisons between Bulgarian and Anglophone authors), literary reception, cultural history, and critical theory.

Dr. Igov has submitted a total of 13 articles for the current application, one of which exceeds 25 pages. Additionally, he has authored two monographs: *Flags and Keys: Poetics of the Epigraph* (2022) and *How to Make a City: Fictional Models of the City in the Contemporary British Novel (Ian McEwan and Martin Amis)*. The latter is based on his doctoral dissertation.

The majority of Igov's publications are written in Bulgarian and published in Bulgaria; those written in English were also published here.

I will next consider his monograph *Flags and Keys: Poetics of the Epigraph* (2022). The monograph comprises 212 pages and consists of an introduction, 5 chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliographical section. Igov uses Gérard Genette's book *Seuils* as a point of departure, yet he elaborates that he has expanded upon the French researcher's methodology and developed his own. His approach is based on the functional typology of epigraphs, classifying them as "keys" or "flags." In Chapter 2 of his monograph, the author delineates the two primary functions of epigraphs. One of the main strengths of Igov's text is its high readability. In addition, the author makes a deliberate effort to stay connected with

his readers by sharing his thoughts and recollections, which is also one of the strengths of his writing.

Chapter 1 is titled “The Epigraph in the English Literary Tradition.” I find this title unacceptable. This chapter examines the literary works of non-English writers who write in English. While Walter Scott's Scottishness has been duly recognized, Charles Robert Maturin's Irish background has not received the same level of acknowledgement. This is despite the fact that his Irish identity was explicitly mentioned by reviewers of his book *Melmoth the Wanderer*, such as in the much-quoted review in *Edinburgh Review*, as early as the beginning of the 19th century. In my opinion, it is oversimplifying to solely discuss an English literary tradition when extensive research has been conducted on the diverse ethnic composition of the British Isles. Moreover, the academic fields of Irish and Scottish studies are also progressing rapidly. One additional shortcoming of this chapter is the chaotic manner in which the material is presented. There is a clear inclination to abruptly shift from one topic to another - from Scott to the literature of the fin de siècle. Incidentally, *краевековие* is the Bulgarian equivalent of the latter.

Given that the Associate Professorship will involve teaching translation, I will take the liberty of making a few additional remarks, specifically about texts examined in some later chapters. The Bulgarian version of the title of Scott's novel *The Heart of Midlothian* is "Единбургската тъмница". Zhechka Georgieva's Bulgarian translation of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* renders the name of the family observed by Victor's creature as "Дьо Ласей", "ДеЛейси" as Igov has done. The proposed transcription by Igov does not match the original presentation of the name as "de Lacey". However, Zhechka Georgieva's translation is absent from Igov's bibliography, indicating that Igov did not use it. Nevertheless, this information ought to have been explicitly mentioned in the text.

The epigraphs in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* were translated by Spas Nikolov. Although Igov included his own translation of one of them (p. 44), the name of the person responsible for translating all of them should have been included in the bibliography.

In the monograph, the second chapter is primarily theoretical. Near the end of this chapter, the functions designated as "key" and "flag" are elucidated. Chapters 3 and 4 explore Anglophone literary texts that employ epigraphs as either "keys" or "flags." Chapter 5 looks at epigraphs in Bulgarian literary contexts. The fact that this literary practice was an "import" is duly acknowledged. However, its creative appropriation by Bulgarian authors is also recognized. I was particularly impressed by the section detailing Ivan Vazov's practice as an *epigraphist*. The monograph's conclusion (titled "Instead of Conclusion") details future research ventures.

The extensive article, co-authored by Igov and Boris Popivanov, titled "You, Party, are the Mother of Life": Bulgarian Literature in the Conditions of Totalitarian Rule", examines the incorporation of Bulgarian writers into the totalitarian regime as a means of validating the nation's political system, the establishment of literary canonization under state socialism, and other associated matters. The majority of the subjects addressed in the article have already been examined in other texts. The article's main merit resides in its ability to re-interpret those themes from the perspective and goals of a new generation of literary critics

I will next dwell on the article "For the Hide of an Epigraph: Tsvetan Stoyanov's Ambiguous Receptive Gestures in the 1959 Edition of Percy Bysshe Shelley's Poems". I am impressed that Igov was able to trace the epigraph from Stoyanov's Preface to the 1959 edition of Shelley's poetry to Teodor Trayanov's poem "Cor Cordium". On the other hand, I can't accept Igov's reading of Pencho Slaveykov's "Heart of Hearts": in it, Shelley is represented as an idealist engaged in an argument with a haughty individualist, who may have been based on Byron.

In fact, Slaveykov's poem is reminiscent of Shelley's own poem "Julian and Maddalo," which the Bulgarian poet may have read in German translation.

Originality and Innovative Character of the Candidate's Publications

Overall, I agree with the candidate's appraisal of his contributions to the research fields to which his writings belong. His monograph *Flags and Keys: Poetics of the Epigraph* testifies to his erudition and analytical skills. His ability to navigate through the diverse spaces of Bulgarian literature is truly astonishing. His interpretations of several Anglophone writings, notably those from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, might benefit from greater reliance on contemporary literary criticism. I already provided a commentary on two of the other texts.

In order to expand the reach of his work, Dr Igov should produce more texts in the English language. It is hoped that more scholars will take notice of his work in the future, and that – with some effort on his part – it will receive greater international recognition.

Teaching

I can only judge the quality of the candidate's teaching based on the amazing number of students' theses he has supervised. The breadth of his supervision demonstrates his pedagogical abilities, commitment to assist his students, and personal perseverance. I am confident that all of these qualities are highly valued by his students.

Conclusion

Dr Igov's research and teaching are consistent with the national and international requirements for an associate professorship. Therefore, I strongly support his appointment as Associate Professor of Post-Second World War English Literature and translation at Sofia University.



**26 April 2024 г.
Veliko Tarnovo**

Prof. Lyudmila Kostova, PhD