

STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Miglena Nikolchina, Sofia University "St. Kl.Ohridski"

on the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.1 Philology (North American Literature - English), DV no. 96/17.11.2023 by the only candidate Assistant Professor Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova

One candidate, Assistant Professor Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova, submitted documents for participation in the competition. After examining the materials and on the basis of my knowledge of Galina Avramova's academic development I offer the following considerations in support of her candidacy.

I have been following Galina Avramova's career as a university teacher and researcher since 2014 when I read her PhD thesis on Canadian writer Timothy Findley. In the following years I had many occasions to observe the energy and dedication with which Avramova treats her teaching as well as her involvement in the academic life of her department. A recent example of this dedication is her active role in the organization of the conference *Crossing Boundaries: Rethinking the Humanities across Disciplines* and, subsequently, in the editorial work around the publication of the proceedings from this conference.

In this statement, I will focus on Avramova's habilitation study and the publications with which Avramova participates in the competition. In her habilitation work, the book *Images of War: American and Canadian Novels of World War II*, Avramova explores Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*, William Wharton's *A Midnight Clear*, and Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*. The author explains that her choice of these novels, all of which are undoubtedly representative of the topic she is exploring, has been guided by their high artistic value but also by the temporal distance between them, which allows her to focus on the historically shifting perspectives towards one and the same event. Her goal is to show how, as we move away from the war, the collective attitudes towards the war experience change. This temporal aspect, however, is not the only aspect of the differences that underlie this selection. The novels in question are as similar in their common theme as they are diverse in their artistic approaches to it, approaches that range from the absurd, the grotesque, the satirical and the fantastic to the adventurous and the sentimental. In this way, the juxtaposition of these novels illustrates not only the multiple images of war, but also the multifaceted nature of the North American novel in the second half of the 20th century. Last but not least, the comparative analysis of these novels allows Avramova to highlight the unique qualities of each writer. Avramova emphasizes the writers' humanism, which clearly plays a decisive role in her choice - humanism, which in this case is as historically specific as it is exceeding this historicity by opening itself to questions of the relationship between the individual and community, questions of suffering, guilt, responsibility, love, and care. Although all these novels – as Avramova points out as yet another of her motifs for selecting them - have been translated into Bulgarian and integrated into the Bulgarian cultural field, it is the first time that they have been juxtaposed in her analysis, which is, again, a contribution. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the author's clear and accessible style makes the book suitable for educational purposes.

With regards to Avramova's other publications, I will single out the following thematic cores. There is, to begin with, her work on Timothy Findley, whose writing Avramova approaches through various

theoretical prisms foregrounding the literary trends characteristic of recent decades. Avramova's publications on Findley include the book *Children Of Darkness* based on Avramova's doctoral thesis and a number of articles ("Identity: Children of Darkness," "Own and foreign in the novelistic text," "Timothy Findley: The Canadian Pilgrim in Bulgaria," "Problematizing history in Timothy Findley's Famous Last Words," "Myth and Meaning in the Post-Modern World: A Glimpse at Timothy Findley's 'Not Wanted on the Voyage'"), which are focused on problems of identity, the specific features of the postmodern narrative, the boundaries between literature and history in our attempts to think the past, intertextuality, the Bulgarian context of Findley's reception, the role of the book market, etc. Findley's work clearly occupies a particularly important place in Avramova's work, which examines it from many sides and, I would say, with passion, drawing in its analysis the work of Russian formalists such as Tynyanov, Michail Bakhtin, Yuri Lotman, Yulia Krasteva, the ideas of theorists such as Michael Rifater, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Linda Hutchen, Gerard Genet's concept of palimpsest and others. Related to this thematic core are Avramova's articles on problematic Canadian literary and cultural identities and the aporias of multiculturalism, as well as her articles on M.G. Vassanji, whose work as an author of Asian origin, born and raised in East Africa, educated in the United States and subsequently a Canadian citizen, offers Avramova yet another opportunity to explore the problems and topics which preoccupy her: individual and cultural identity, borderline cultural spaces, narrativization of memory and the past, isolation and belonging, etc. The process of creating an imaginary Africa in Vassanji's work is considered by Avramova in the framework of David Damrosch's re-conceptualization of world literature as an elliptical reflection of national literature. This allows Avramova to analyze the encounter of the national/ethnic with the global, of the specific with the universal, but also of memory with imagination, thus continuing a number of themes that grow out of her work on Findley.

Galina Avramova's habilitation work expands the perimeter of her prior work to include a wider North American sphere, yet her center continues to be English-Canadian literature, where her contribution is particularly important and necessary. Emphasizing once more the qualities of Avramova's habilitation work and other publications, her teaching activity and her contributions to academic life, I express my support for the election of Dr. Galina Nikolova Avramova to the academic position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.1 Philology (North American literature - English language).

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