

REVIEW

For the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor

Academic Field of the 2. Humanities,

Scholarly Area 2.1. Philology

(English Literature after the Second World War and Translation – English),

Department of English and American Studies,

Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology,

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",

Announced in the State Gazette, no. 103/12.12.2023, p. 118

By Associate Professor Ognyan Borisov Kovachev, PhD,

Scholarly Area 2.1. Philology,

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Member of the Academic Jury (RD-38-16 of 11.1.2024)

1. Competition Data

In the announced competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Scholarly Area 2.1. Philology (English Literature after the Second World War and Translation – English), announced in the State Gazette, no. 103/12.12.2023, p. 118, the only one candidate, Dr. Angel Mihaylov Igov has submitted all the necessary documents.

In view of the implementation of the minimum national scientometric requirements under Article 2b 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 Dr. Angel Mihaylov Igov points out the following contributions:

For Indicator Group A (min. 50 points): Diploma No. SU 2012-34/ 23.04.2012 from the Faculty of Slavic Philology of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" for awarding a PhD Degree based on a defended dissertation on the topic of "Fictional Models of the City in the Contemporary British Novel: Ian McEwan and Martin Amis"; for Indicator Group B (min. 100 items): Habilitation Thesis "Flags and Keys: A Poetics of the Epigraph", Plovdiv: Zhanet-45, 2022, ISBN:978-619-186-706-6; for Indicator Group C (min. 200 items): one monograph, one study and 12 articles; for Indicator Group D (min. 50 items): 6 citations. Based on the above, it is clear that Angel Igov fully meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of Associate Professor.

Dr. Angel Igov participates in the competition with a List of 15 selected titles, including the Habilitation Thesis cited above, the monograph "How to Make a City? Fictional Models of the City in the Modern British Novel (Ian McEwan and Martin Amis)", Sofia: UI "St. Kliment Ohridski", 2023, ISBN:978-954-07-5753-7, based on a defended dissertation, one study and 12 academic papers in Bulgarian and English.

The complete list of academic publications of Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Igov contains 23 titles in areas such as English literature, Bulgarian literature, Comparative Literature, Literary Theory, etc., in Bulgarian and English. He is a member of the Editorial Board of "New Paradigms in English Studies", Sofia: UI St. "Kliment Ohridski", 2017, ISBN:978-954-07-4371-4, and participated in 14 conferences during the period 2009-2023, with academic presentations. Also, the academic experience of Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Igov includes participation in three university research projects related to the study and teaching of English literature and translation training, and his supervision of six student theses during the period 2013-2022.

2. Brief Biographical Data

Angel Igov is a graduate of the First English Language High School (2000). Graduated from Higher Education at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" with a BA in English philology (2005) and an MA in the "Literary Studies" Postgraduate Programme (2007) at the FSIF. In 2012, he defended his dissertation on "Fictional Models of the City in the Contemporary British Novel: Ian McEwan and Martin Amis" at the Department of Literary Theory at SU. During his doctoral studies, he was a visiting researcher under the Fulbright International Program at the University of California, Berkeley, USA.

In 2012, he joined Sofia University as a Senior Assistant at the Department of English and American Studies. He teaches seminar classes on "Translation", "English Literature: Romanticism" and "English Literature from Modernism to Postmodernism" in the undergraduate program "English Philology"; as well as lecture courses on "Literature and Cinema: The British Postmodern Novel", "Literature and Adaptation" and "21st Century Literature: Rewriting and Remaking" in the MA programs of the department "Communication: Language, Literature, Media" and "Language and Culture ". Since 2023, he teaches the lecture course "English Literature from Modernism to Postmodernism" in the undergraduate program "English Philology". From 2014 until 2018, he was in charge of the literary and cultural section in the Department of English and American Studies. From 2019 to 2023, he is a member of the General Assembly of the SU.

The candidate also has significant achievements as a writer, translator from English, journalist and literary critic. His novel "A Short History of Shame" (Siela, 2011) was translated and published in English, and the novel "The Meek" (Janet 45, 2015) won the "Hristo G. Danov" National Award in the Section of Bulgarian Fiction for 2016, and has been translated and published in German, French and Macedonian. The German translation was awarded the House of World Cultures Prize for 2020. He is also the author of the novel "Fine Dust Particles" (Janet 45, 2017) and the short story collections "Meetings along the Road" (Lodos, 2002) and "K" (Adrona, 2006). He has translated 15 books of fiction, poetry, essays and documentaries. He is the winner of the "Krastan Dyankov" Grand Prize for the translation of the novel "The Collector of Lost Things" by Jeremy Page in 2016 and the "Krastan Diankov" Special Award for the translation of the novel "The Underground Railroad" by Colson Whitehead in 2018.

As a writer and translator, Angel Igov has participated in national and international literary festivals and literary residencies, including the International Writers Program in Iowa, USA (2022) and the Landis & Geer Foundation residency in Zug, Switzerland (2023). As a journalist, he was a radio host and literary observer for the “5th Degree on the Richter Scale” television programme. As a literary observer of the "Kultura" weekly, he published over two hundred reviews of newly published Bulgarian and translated books. He participated in the jury of the literary awards "Vic", "Elias Canetti", "Ivan Nikolov", "Krastan Dyankov" and others.

3. *Description of Scholarly Publications*

Dr. Igov has presented the monograph "Flags and Keys: A Poetics of the epigraph" (Zhanet 45, 2022) as a habilitation thesis. Its scholarly editor is Assoc. Professor Darin Tenev and Assoc. Professor Zelma Catalan and Assoc. Professor Yordan Eftimov are scholarly reviewers. As the subtitle suggests, the epigraph, also called *motto*, as a part of the paratextual framework of the literary work is the thesis's main subject. The form, functions and uses of this type of text in numerous poetic and prose works are mainly explored. A huge number of them belong to English literature, where, according to the author, this paratextual component appeared and received its first impetus. The time span of the analyzed literary corpus is from the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century – the Gothic Revival novel and the poetry of English Romanticism – to the 1960s and the 20th century postmodern literature. The title introduces the conceptual metaphors of *flag* and *key* as theoretical tools that name, according to Igov's understanding, the two basic functions of the epigraph. The first indicates an *outward* intertextual relation with a previous work, and the second sets an *inward* direction for interpreting the own text through a meaning that the motto accentuates, updates or triggers.

The book follows the usual structure and logic of exposition for this academic genre: an introduction, a main section consisting of five chapters, a conclusion and a list of the primary and secondary literature used. The First Chapter outlines and maps the historical framework of literary phenomena, and highlights their specific features. The Second Chapter introduces the theoretical apparatus, methodology and conceptual tools of the study. The author starts from the foundational development of the study of the paratext by J. Genet (translated into

English by Jane Lewin), whose ideas he expands, adapts and – I can confidently say – exceeds and enriches by specific analyzes of his own. It establishes, exemplifies, and systematizes the most commonly used sources of epigraphs. At the end of the Second Chapter, the "key" and "flag" functions of the motto are defined in more detail. In the Third and Fourth Chapters, respectively, each of them is examined and a detailed analysis of specific works from different periods, genres and authors in the English literature is conducted. The Fifth Chapter includes in the vast total of the monograph a particular comparative potential, since the subject of research in it is the use of the motto in Bulgarian literature. It contains not only a typology and analysis of specific examples, but also a sympathetically daring (and at the same time selfconsciously risky) attempt at literary-historical modeling of the phenomenon in a native context. This endeavor can turn into a conceptual beginning worth continuing in the perspective of studies of both our national literature and comparative literary studies.

Based on the above, I will allow myself the conclusion that the monograph "Flags and Keys: A Poetics of the Epigraph" by Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Igov meets the requirements for a habilitation thesis, represents an original scientific study, which, with few exceptions, correctly cites and indicates its sources, and is a contribution in areas such as English Studies, Comparative Studies, etc. With its research approach, literary-historical and theoretical awareness, analytical work and ability to build a critical plot, it becomes not only a valuable scholarly product, but also a book that will be of interest to a much wider readership.

The second monograph presented by Angel Igov in his list is "How to Make a City? Fictional Models of the City in the Modern British Novel (Martin Amis and Ian McEwan)" (St. Kliment Ohridski UP, 2023). This publication is based on the slightly modified and supplemented text of a dissertation work defended before 2012. The book consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a list of references. In the title, two of the most representative names among contemporary British novelists indicate the object, and the concept "fictional model of the city" sets the main semantic direction of the research, its searches, analyzes and conclusions. The modern city and its aesthetic depictions are the

subject not only of diverse arts, but also of numerous humanitarian disciplines. Therefore, the methodology and conceptual apparatus of the study and argumentation include those of sociologists such as G. Simmel, Max Weber, Henri Lefebvre, etc., of urban researchers such as Richard Sennett and Jane Jacobs, of culturalists and historians of urban culture such as Raymond Williams, Peter Ackroyd and David Harvey, but perhaps to the greatest extent – to Walter Benjamin and his followers. In view of the thus defined problem, the key concepts of the work are literary and literary aesthetic: Viktor Shklovsky's *alienation*, Wolfgang Iser's *fictionalization*, Benjamin's *flâneur* and R. Sennett's *narrative space*.

In Chapter Two, the literary-historical approach covers images of European cities in the last two centuries, mainly through works of British and French literature. Each section applies a specific research perspective or traces individual author's approaches to the fictional construction of literary cities: London, as seen by Wordsworth, Dickens and Woolf, Paris – by Balzac, Dublin – by Joyce. In the course of their analysis, a panorama of literary periods and styles unfolds: romanticism – realism – modernism. In Chapters Three and Four, the depictions of cities in novels by Amis and McEwan, respectively, are explored through the prism of central according to Chief Assistant-Professor Igov motives such as: reification/neutralization and marginalization of the urban environment; the (il)legibility of the city; its anthropological dimensions – the figurative of the body, private time and space, the reincarnations of the flâneur, the (im)possible construction of personality; the social mechanisms of money, power, consumerism, utopia/dystopia, etc.

Valuable contribution also is the author's experience as a translator of some of the studied novels, as well as the parallel citation and comparison of the original and their corresponding translated texts. The conclusion summarizes and systematizes the main findings and assumptions of the work.

11 more articles and 1 co-authored study were submitted for participation in the competition, a large part of which were published in peer-reviewed and indexed scholarly periodicals. They add to the general impression of the scholarly and academic realization of Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Igov in the fields of English Literature and the Theory and Practice of Translation, and testify to his further potentials.

4. Main Contributions

The habilitation thesis “Flags and Keys” further enhances and develops, as I have already noted, the approaches to the theory of the paratext and specifically of the epigraph contained in the foundational work “Thresholds” («Seuils») of Genette. An original scholarly contribution is the literary-historical review of the appearance and development of the epigraph in Bulgarian literature, as well as the functional binary typology of “flags” and “keys”. I would not, however, confirm the same assessment regarding its appearance and development in English literature. In the next part of the review I will state my rationale.

As original scientific contributions of the monograph “How to make a city”, I would highlight the systematic comparison of Amis’s and McEwan’s oeuvres in the context of literary history and social theory, as well as the analysis of the construction of a fictional urban space in their novels. It is also worth highlighting as a scholarly contribution the so-called by the researcher “Dickensian paradox” in the narrative method of Charles Dickens: directing the reader's opinion to objects and problems through their initial alienation, which – seemingly paradoxically – plays the role of optical approximation.

The other submitted smaller publications are thematically and problematically related to the two monographs or to the reception of translations in our country and its relationship with the receiving literary system. Contributions in the latter direction are articles establishing surprising kinship between Bulgarian and foreign-language poetic works, such as “Tsarkinya in the Garden”, “On the Skin of an Epigraph”, “The Citing Modernist”, etc.

5. Critical Notes and Recommendations

Against the bright background of the overall strong and very convincing impression left by the publications submitted by Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Igov, unfortunately, some inaccuracies and omissions are revealed in some of them. For example, in Ognyan Kovachev’s monograph entitled “The Gothic Novel: Genealogy, Genre, Aesthetics” (Ednorog, 2004), which Angel Igov indicates almost half-hiddenly on p. 24 in “Flags and Keys: A Poetics of the Epigraph” considerable attention has been paid to the appearance and use of the epigraph in this typically English literary genre. The observation begins on p. 271,

with an overview of the frequency with which epigraphs appear in novels by Ann Radcliffe, M. G. Lewis, and Ch. R. Maturin, at the same time interpreted precisely as manifestations of a self-conscious intertextuality. It continues on p. 272, citing G. Genette's comments from "Thresholds" in the English translation. The next two pages (273-275), however, contain an entirely original discovery. For the first time, a peculiar Gothic-philosophical triangle was recognized there between "The Castle of Otranto" (1765), "Fancies of a Ghost Seer" (1766) by Immanuel Kant and "The Monk" (1796) by M. G. Lewis, formed as a result of use as epigraphs of the same verses by the Roman poet Horace. I would allow myself the liberty to state that the mention of these facts by Angel Igov (by the way, he wrote a review of the work in question upon its publication) in his monograph would not only serve the truth, but would also enrich his work. I am far from claiming plagiarism on behalf of the candidate. No one is insured against such an accident. But I would recommend a more careful work with the sources and proper acknowledgement of their earlier contributions.

Another disagreement is caused by a sentence in "Flags and Keys", p. 42: "Of Graham Greene, of Evelyn Waugh, of Hemingway and Steinbeck, we can speak as masters of the title – a phrase that would have a harder time finding addressees in the context of the 19th century (perhaps Jane Austen?)". Such an assessment should require justification by reasons for the criterion of mastery of the title, free from subjectivity and conjecture. This would avoid the impression of an unfounded underestimation of the intrinsic value of novel titles from the 19th century, which have remained proverbial even for people who have not read the works themselves. For what reason titles such as "The Third Man" and "The Quiet American", "Brideshead Revisited" and "Decline and Fall" (which, by the way, cites a famous Enlightenment title), "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Cannary Row" are more masterful than "Vanity Fair," "Great Expectations," "Wuthering Heights," "The Last of the Mohicans," or "Far from the Madding Crowd"?

Finally, I will allow myself a disagreement on a translation. In a note on p. 126 of "Flags and Keys" the title of the Pierre Klosowski's book « Sade mon prochain » is translated as "Sade, my neighbour" and this translation is preserved on the following pages. It would be more appropriate, in view of the overall content of the French book, to translate the title as "Sad,

my neighbour", through the secondary biblical meaning of *prochain*, which is also available in the English word *neighbour*.

6. Conclusion

Based on the above, I believe that Chief Assistant-Professor Angel Mihaylov Igov, the only candidate in the competition for Associate Professor in 2.1. Philology (English Literature after the Second World War and Translation - English language), announced in the State Gazette, no. 103/12.12.2023, p. 118, meets the requirements for occupying this position. I give a positive assessment of his participation and propose that he be elected to the academic position of Associate Professor in the academic field of the 2. Humanities, scholarly area 2.1. Philology (English Literature after the Second World War and Translation - English), at the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Classical and Modern Languages, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

Date: 26.04.2024

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. Ognyan Kovachev)
