

OPINION

by

Assoc. Prof. Ogniana Georgieva-Teneva, PhD – New Bulgarian University, Sofia

regarding the materials submitted for participation in the competition
for the acquisition of the academic position of *Associate Professor*, Faculty of Slavic Studies,
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Professional Field **2.1 Philology**

(Bulgarian Literature - Bulgarian Literature from the First World War to the Present Day.
Literature for Children and Adolescents)

in accordance with a competition announced in SG, no. 24 of 17.03.2023,
with a single candidate **Ch. Assist. Prof. Nadezhda Angelova Stoyanova, PhD**

1. Opinion in compliance with the regulations for the acquisition of the academic position *Associate Professor*

Nadezhda Stoyanova has submitted all the necessary documents required by the Law on Scientific Degrees and Titles when applying for a competition for the acquisition of the academic position of *Associate Professor*. The minimum national requirements are not only met, but also significantly exceeded.

2. Opinion on the general scientific activity of the candidate

With her extensive scientific activity and creativity, her remarkable self-exigence and research methodicity, Nadezhda Stoyanova is today well-known to the local philological community and enjoys its respect. This is due, generally speaking, to her 96 publications, of which 2 monographs, 7 studies, 47 scientific articles and 40 other study materials; her participations in numerous scientific forums and projects - Bulgarian and international; the large-scale compilation and editorial work, which also includes the chief editorship of the journal "Philological Forum"; her teaching experience in the areas of Bulgarian Philology and Slavic Philology. The scientific authority of Nadezhda Stoyanova is reflected in the 80 citations, 30 of which she chose to participate with in the current competition, as well as in the various prestigious awards and honors for research activity.

3. Opinion on the scientific contributions of Nadezhda Stoyanova

Nadezhda Stoyanova participated in the announced competition with 1 monograph, 3 studies and 12 articles, 3 of which are scientific publications referenced and indexed in world-famous scientific databases. The research studies are conducted within the areas of *History of Bulgarian Literature – XIX and XX Century* and *Bulgarian Literature for Children and Adolescents*.

Varied in subject matter and research problematics, Nadezhda Stoyanova's publications have the following common features: precision in collecting and analyzing the empirical material; in-depth understanding and original interpretation in her own conceptual perspective and within different contexts - authorial, critical, literary-historical, literary-theoretical, cultural. Nowhere in the hundreds of pages that make up the scientific assets of Nadezhda Stoyanova did I come across a hasty or insufficiently substantiated statement.

Nadezhda Stoyanova's research studies also intersect in another common aspect – the focus on omitted, poorly lit or underappreciated literary sources. The effort to fill in such gaps is purposeful and systematically explained through specific deictic expressions. Nadezhda Stoyanova's ability to discover facts, works and image domains that are significant for a more comprehensive grasp of our literary history, but have hitherto escaped research attention, is undoubtedly the result of accumulated knowledge and critical experience.

3.1. Nadezhda Stoyanova's habilitation thesis "Adornments and Grimaces. Fashion and Modernity in Bulgarian Literature of the 1920s and 1930s" references a problem which has not been studied purposefully, but developed only peripherally and in different meaningful perspectives.

The introduction of the thesis states that fashion in Bulgarian literature of the 1920s and 1930s is a significant object of study, which arouses interest both with the diversification of the topic about the urge to repress the trauma, to legitimize the Self, to choose life not in the past, but in the present, and with the specific ideas and concepts of interwar modernism. The introductory part of the thesis treats fashion through various theoretical perspectives – sociological, philosophical, psychological, cultural-historical – in order to focus on its artistic and critical uses. The presented goals, objectives, structure and limits of the study certify its validity. They also demonstrate scientific consistency reflected in the extension of motifs from the doctoral to the habilitation thesis - a sign of continuity between the stages in the research development of Nadezhda Stoyanova.

The thesis draws on artistic material not only from the 1920s and 1930s, but also from the previous and subsequent decades which produced literary images of fashion (or "failed" to do so in the period after 1944). The systematization and compositional design of the exhibition is successful beyond question, taking into account the huge array of researched works of art, their diverse problematics, the diversity of their discursive implementation and the metatexts covered.

In its entirety, the habilitation thesis is a serious and scientifically reasoned study. Its main part begins with careful observations of the cultural-historical context of the researched sources and, above all, of the phenomenon of fashion in the eyes of Bulgarian poets, fiction writers and other representatives of the intelligentsia. The attention to the *fashion-time* relationship substantiates the connection of fashion with modernity and with the urban environment, whereas tracing the dynamics within the theoretical concepts allows Nadezhda Stoyanova to derive important invariant characteristics of fashion, relating to novelty, power and economic legitimation, modern subjectivity, transhistoricity etc. A strong asset of the work is the combination of the descriptive approach with the analytical one, which allows the considered theoretical models (Georg Simmel, Fernand Braudel, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Lipovetsky and many others) to be evaluated and become building blocks of the candidate's own conception. The careful interweaving of the analyzed contextual trajectories also involves the studied reflection of fashion in a broad media plan, together with fashion magazines. The high value of these observations is hardly surprising, considering, among other things, Nadezhda Stoyanova's collaboration in the project "Periodika i literatura" initiated by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The in-depth study of the Bulgarian experience of Paris as the "capital of fashion" contributes both to the general knowledge of culture and to the better understanding of the work of At. Dalchev, K. Konstantinov, N. Rainov and others. By paying attention to fashion as a way of changing identity and expressing emptiness and imitation, Nadezhda Stoyanova analyzes the ironic and parodic images of "modern" personages, such as the dandy, the fop, the bored man, the song-singers and the coupletists. In the examination of each sub-theme, the research focus is distributed in appropriate proportions between general artistic trends and individual creative features.

To summarize, Nadezhda Stoyanova's habilitation thesis offers an original and adequate reading of the literary interpretations of fashion in the interwar period,

simultaneously revealing the references between fashion and modernism. Finally, I would like to mention the resourceful and elegant artistic layout of the book, which is in harmony with its thematic scope.

3.2. The other publications on "big" literature with which Nadezhda Stoyanova participated in the competition complement her profile as an established researcher. They have been published in prestigious editions, some of them are in English. The common characteristic they share is the dual orientation in terms of content: on the one hand, towards important metatextual studies, and on the other, towards one's own interpretation of the literary works within the research focus.

„Dalchev beyond the Canon. The Case with “Hronika” / “A Chronicle” pays respect to the right of the great writer to select his own texts, but at the same time points out the benefit of a literary examination of works left "under the line" - not only to present the author's self-reflection, but also to provoke reflection on the establishment of the "authentic" image of the poet and to apostrophize inertial reading. Systematically and without unnecessary pathos, Nadezhda Stoyanova opens up new horizons of meaning in her reading of "Weekday Travel" by B. Raynov. The interpretation of the problem of boredom gives a new perspective both on the focused work and on the history and poetics of the Bulgarian novel, and through them - on important aspects of cultural life in the 1940s. The article "Narstud" in vol VI. of "Periodika i literatura" successfully applies the intertextual procedure in revealing connections between the analyzed journal and other periodicals, while achieving a dense content analysis and tracing the changes in the publication concept. The same density of content is also characteristic of the "Atlas of Bulgarian Literature as a Literary-Historical Project" where the methodology used by S. Yanev is conceived as an approach to a never-ending history of Bulgarian literature, as a starting point for endless invariant modeling of the meta-literary narrative. In the article about "The Great Unknown" by K. Kristev, I see a development of Nadezhda Stoyanova's interest in little-known or marginal cultural subjects, which, however, maintain continuity in spiritual life and establish an original image of reception studies. True to her interest in understudied literary fields, Nadezhda Stoyanova also turns to the genre of airbrushing - a study that proves with new arguments the author's ability to read "up close", but also with a view to intertextual interactions, in this case in relation to Italian Futurism. I recognize the articles "The Inventor and the "Charm of the Moon" and "Geo Milev and the Philosopher's Stone" as manifestations of scientific attention to different

literary images of an alternative "reality", regardless of whether their temporal orientation is towards the secrets of the future or the secrets of the past and its eternal questions corresponding to all points on the temporal axis.

3.3. Nadezhda Stoyanova has a total of 7 publications on literature for children and adolescents - 1 research study and 6 articles.

First of all, I want to emphasize that there are many "warm connections" between Nadezhda Stoyanova's researches on "big" literature and those on children's literature. I recognize these connections in the habilitation thesis, for example, in the advancement of essential associations between "The New Vegetarian" by D. Kalfov and "Patilan Kingdom" by Ran Bosilek, as well as in publications on children's and adolescent literature. The examples are many, but here I will mark those that Geo Milev appealed to as means of rapid and radical change in his poetry for adults and children: the kinship in machine-human relations in the "two" literatures; the allegory as a poetic code in N. Kanchev's works for children and adults, etc. I perceive the many similar intertextual connections that Nadezhda Stoyanova establishes as one of the convincing arguments of her otherwise synthesized and pronounced disagreement with the "traditional underestimation of children's literature" (in her second article about N. Kanchev).

The thin red line running through all of Nadezhda Stoyanova's research studies on children's literature connects various forms of questioning the comprehensiveness or relevance of existing interpretations and facilitates the expression of new versions of the artistic ideas conveyed. The available deconstructions are presented without sharp gestures of disagreement, but with subtlety, which is a "trademark" of Nadezhda Stoyanova. At the same time, the introduction of a new interpretative perspective is confident and convincing, it manages to direct the literary scholar's attention to unseen or underappreciated implicit ideas, and ultimately - to the discovery of an unexpected artistic meaning. An eloquent example of this is the study dealing with the topic of technics in Bulgarian literature for children and adolescents from the interwar period, which problematizes the figurative juxtaposition of the concepts "child" and "machine", traces genre transformations and personage figurations, and demonstrates yet another manifestation of research sensitivity to the connections between "the two literatures".

The article on the Geo Milev series "Child's Life" can be defined not only as a literary study, which conceptualizes the analyzed works as part of the author's general

modernist project, but also as a kind of investigation that focuses on the scattered signs of the history of albums and arranges them as elements of one's own view of them. To be a discoverer within the domain of a literary work that has been thoroughly studied for years is an obvious success – Nadezhda Stoyanova achieved it by publishing a hitherto unknown text by Geo Milev (without forgetting to express her gratitude to a colleague who assisted her in this endeavor). In the conceptual plan of this publication there is also a perhaps too bold, but in any case thought-provoking thesis: that Geo Milev's album children's poems, "although unpretentious", according to the definition of the author herself, are aimed at the formation of future readers - co-authors of the development of artistic and real-life plots.

The interest in Bulgarian children's literature from the interwar period also covers the genre of the novel, with special emphasis on its development by Kalina Malina and her focused interest in the problem of orphanhood.

Exploring Binyo Ivanov's works for children, Nadezhda Stoyanova once again exhibits her recognizable style, which maintains the balance between dense historicity and her own interpretation of the analyzed texts. The articles on "Over the Field, In the Sky" and "The Journey of Grandmother's Glasses" affirm B. Ivanov's significant role in Bulgarian children's literature with new arguments related to the characteristic artistic convention, the dynamic verse structure and above all to the emphasized subjectivity of the lyrical point of view and the inner depths of the Self.

Nadezhda Stoyanova also makes a contributive reading of Nikolay Kanchev's works for children - another exceptional "presence" in Bulgarian poetry. The polyglossal critical reception of this thoroughly studied work is a starting point for making valuable observations on the poetics of N. Kanchev - its attempt at constructing an image of the independent personality, alongside its effort in destabilizing dubious values and personages in the literary production from the time of the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

Nadezhda Stoyanova's research interest also covers contemporary Bulgarian works of literature for children and adolescents. She manages to capture the peculiarities of their figurative language through her studies on two books by Zornitsa Hristova, whose artistic codes she interprets with familiar insight.

4. Conclusion

The presented scientific achievements give me reason to consider Nadezhda Stoyanova a well-established literary scholar and an experienced teacher. That is why I confidently propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Ch. Assist. Prof. Nadezhda Stoyanova the academic position *Associate Professor* in professional field 2.1 Philology ((Bulgarian Literature – Bulgarian Literature from the First World War to the Present Day. Literature for Children and Adolescents).

Sofia, July 9, 2023

Assoc. Prof. Ogniyana Georgieva-Teneva