

## OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil. Boyko Penchev Penchev, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," regarding the scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Angelova Stoyanova for the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.1. Philology. Bulgarian Literature from World War I to the Present Day. Literature for Children and Youth, announced in the State Gazette, issue 24, March 17, 2023.

### **I. Evaluation of compliance with minimum national requirements and requirements of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"**

From the provided evidence, it is clear that Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova meets the minimum national requirements according to the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and the Regulations for its implementation.

### **II. Research activity**

As a participant in the competition, the candidate Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova has submitted 16 publications, including 1 monograph, 3 studies, and 12 articles. Three of the articles were published in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases; 7 publications (1 study and 6 articles) are in the field of "Literature for Children and Youth." The publications are organized into four thematic groups:

1. Fashion and modernity in Bulgarian literature of the 1920s and 1930s (This is the main topic of Dr. Stoyanova's monographic work).
2. Beyond the canon. Interpretations of Bulgarian literature.
3. Modern everyday life. Literary interpretations.
4. Literature and technology.

In the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" the greatest weight is naturally given to the quality of the monographic work. Therefore, my attention will be primarily focused on the monograph "Ornaments and Grimaces. Fashion and Modernity in Bulgarian Literature of the 1920s and 1930s" (Sofia: Paradigma, 2022). Firstly, a clearly defined merit of the work should be noted - the successful choice of the thematic field (fashion) and the theoretical approach (problematization of the experience of time in the context of modernity). The main question that gives structural unity to the monograph is "to what extent can fashion be perceived as an expression of self-consciousness of the modern individual in Bulgarian culture, particularly in literature from the interwar years" (p. 26). The well-considered theoretical perspective has led to a clear and logically connected structure of the work. The first part is devoted to the interpretation of fashion in the self-consciousness of the modern era, first in a theoretical-philosophical perspective (with Baudelaire's famous essay "The Painter of Modern Life" as a starting point) and then as a phenomenon of Bulgarian modernity in the texts of Bulgarian critics

and intellectuals from the interwar period. Here too, the rich erudition and literary-historical awareness of the author are impressively displayed, as well as her knowledge of the literary periodicals and cultural life of the studied era. The second part examines a large number of artistic texts in which fashion is present at thematic and figurative levels. (A large part of these texts are analyzed seriously for the first time). Among the analytical topics are Paris in the texts of authors like Atanas Dalchev, Konstantin Konstantinov, Nikolay Raynov, Petar Osogovets, "heterotopias" like cabarets and carnivals, *dandyism*, etc. The leading aspect in this part of the book is the analysis of the possibilities that fashion offers for playing out various identities and assuming alternative social roles.

The monograph "Ornaments and Grimaces" works with a rich and diverse literary-historical material, bringing to light texts and authors that have not been a subject of research before. However, it should be noted that this is not merely the rehabilitation of "lesser-known names," but an exceptionally successful attempt to uncover the complex ways in which Bulgarian literature of this period dealt with the ephemeral time of modernity. In her analysis of the relationship with fashion as a form of "practice of the Self" the researcher combines curiosity with critical analysis, not shying away from cases where self-presentation through fashion degrades into stereotyping and lack of reflection. In the study, "modernity is understood as the horizon of the fashionable individual," not as something given. Particularly innovative and productive is the connection between the crisis (a well-known theme in all studies on Bulgarian literature after World War I) and fashion, which becomes a step towards interpreting the more general patterns of human attitude towards time in the literature of that period.

The issue of the link between the conception of time and the construction of modern identity is the hidden thread connecting Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova's habilitation work with her doctoral dissertation. Clearly, we are dealing with a young scholar whose research has a gravitational center of its own, demonstrating a lasting scholarly and existential commitment to the subject of her research. The monograph and articles of Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova construct a new picture of Bulgarian literature from the interwar period, which problematizes the sharp boundary between the avant-garde of the early 1920s and the processes in the second half of the 1920s and the 1930s.

The attached scientific studies and articles in the application materials complement and enrich Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova's scholarly profile. Some of them problematize the canon through readings of lesser-known authors or works (such as the poem "Chronicle" by Atanas Dalchev or the series "Children's Life" by Geo Milev). The articles demonstrate philological awareness and interpretive approaches that enrich the image of the respective author without undue attempts at a "revolutionary" new interpretation. Another group of articles and studies deals with the issue of everyday life in modernity. In fact, the specific, non-monumental "heroization of everyday life" is one of the important analytical discoveries in the monograph "Ornaments and Grimaces." The attached articles related to this theme begin to outline a significantly different picture of Bulgarian literature from the late 1920s and the 1930s, in which insignificance and "boredom" as thematic dominants are read in an entirely new way. An example of this original approach is the article "The

Great Unknown: A Gallery of Types of Bulgarians in Modern Times," bringing into consideration an essay by Kiril Krastev, in order to discover a new type of modern individual, who as a reader practices reading as life-transformative communication.

Nadezhda Stoyanova has an affinity for the non-monumental and "ephemeral" in the literary projections of human existence. Her readings of authors and texts from the 1930s offer an alternative canon of non-heroic, non-pathetic, and anti-romantic modeling of human being. Instead of the ideologically motivated heroism or the pose of romantic exceptionalism, the researcher uncovers in the studied texts skeptical and cheerful acceptance of life, experienced through art and literature.

A special place in Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova's research interests is occupied by children's literature. However, children's literature is not viewed as a closed niche but as a marginal field in which tensions of "high" literature are once again manifested. Not coincidentally, the subject of study in three of the presented articles is the "children's" poetry of "difficult" poets like Nikolay Kanchev and Binyo Ivanov. In these articles, we once again witness Dr. Stoyanova's analytical skills, based on a thorough knowledge of the literary-historical context of the studied works.

A separate group of publications included in the application deal with the theme of the relationship between technology and literature. We can confidently say that this is a problem that Nadezhda Stoyanova has discovered for Bulgarian literary studies and, moreover, succeeded in attracting other young researchers to it.

In Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova's research, a unifying motif clearly stands out - the investigation of marginal zones of human existence from a literary perspective, with the aim of outlining behaviors and identity strategies that highlight the historically changing substance of literature. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova is an established young scholar with a recognizable profile and style. Recognition for the valuable nature of her work is evident through the numerous awards she has received, among which we can mention the Award for Young Scholars from Sofia University and the Sofia Municipality for 2016.

### **III. Teaching activity**

As an assistant in the Department of Bulgarian Literature since 2011 (since 2013 - chief assistant), Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova leads numerous lectures and seminars. First and foremost in terms of her teaching work, it should be noted her seminar exercises in the disciplines "Bulgarian Literature from World War I to the Present Day" and "Bulgarian Literature between the Two World Wars," as well as the lecture course "Literature for Children and Youth." In all the disciplines she teaches, Nadezhda Stoyanova demonstrates high professionalism, conscientiousness, and a dialogical approach. Her ability to work with students, to arouse and maintain their curiosity in literary studies, is evidenced by the fact that she has been the supervisor of 15 diploma theses (11 bachelor's and 4 master's) at the Faculty of Slavic Philology. Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova shows kindness, patience, and punctuality, combined with the rare ability to

make Bulgarian literature engaging, which is why she is among the most respected and beloved teachers in the Faculty of Slavic Philology.

#### **IV. Involvement in the Academic Community**

In addition to being a brilliant young scholar, Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova is well-known among her colleagues as a tireless initiator and organizer of events that foster the spirit of the literary research community. Her remarkable work ethic and conscientiousness are evident in her tireless efforts as a compiler of scientific collections and editor of academic journals. She has been involved in the compilation of 17 scientific collections and one anthology of literary texts. Of particular importance is Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova's contribution as the founder and driving force behind the periodical journal for student scientific creativity, "Philological Forum," which has developed into a highly regarded publication for students and doctoral candidates on a national and international scale.

Her project activity is exceptionally impressive. She has been a project coordinator or participant in 38 research projects, including 2 international and 5 national projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Science's National Science Fund. In all collective initiatives and projects she participates in, Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova consistently demonstrates remarkable energy and dedication. Evidence of her qualities lies in her regular involvement in various interinstitutional and international projects. The academic authority of Dr. Nadezhda Stoyanova within the academic community of the Faculty of Slavic Philology is also evidenced by the fact that she has been a longstanding member of the Faculty Council.

#### **Conclusion**

After reviewing the materials and scientific works presented in the competition, analyzing their significance and the scientific, applied, and practical contributions contained therein, I give my positive evaluation and recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Slavic Philology for the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nadezhda Angelova Stoyanova to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology. Bulgarian Literature from World War I to the Present Day. Literature for Children and Youth.

Sofia

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