

OPINION

**by Prof. DSc Magdalena Kostova-Panayotova,
member of a scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of
“professor”, 2.1. Philology (Literature of the peoples of Europe, America, Asia, Africa
and Australia - Western European literature),
announced in SG No. 24 of 17.03.2023**

Overall assessment of the candidate

In the competition for professor of 2.1 Philology (Literature of the peoples of Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Australia - Western European literature), only one candidate participated - Associate Professor PhD Kalin Mihailov. He participated by presenting the following scientific products that carry the quality of scientific research: two books (*Christian literature - between inclusion and delimitation*, University Publishing House of St. Kl. Ohridski, Sofia, 2013, and *Christianity and literature. Figures of the ignoble*, Sofia, 2023) and 8 scientific publications on the topic of the competition.

Assoc. Prof. PhD Kalin Mihailov graduated from Bulgarian philology studies with a second major in French at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski. He has worked as an assistant professor, senior assistant professor, chief assistant professor, and full-time associate professor of Western European literature from 2001 to the present. In 2000, he defended his doctorate on the topic *Towards the poetics of the French novel between the two world wars: models of violence in the novels of François Mauriac and Georges Bernanos*. He was a lecturer of Bulgarian language at the University of Saarland, Germany, he specialized for a year in Passau, Germany and at the University of Friborg, Switzerland. He was also on a language internship in Soisy-sur-Seine (France). The candidate leads compulsory lecture courses in the specialties of Slavic philology (Ancient and Western European literature), Balkan studies (Ancient Literature), Bulgarian philology, Distance Learning (Ancient and Medieval Literature; Western European Literature) of the Faculty of Slavic Studies and the library and information sciences

specialty of the Faculty of Philology (Western European Literature), as well as elective courses in Spanish and Portuguese philology at Faculty of Classic and Modern Languages.

The researcher participates in research projects such as the German-Bulgarian project with Prof. Marty, *Die Dostojewski-Rezeption in Bulgarien in vergleichender deutsch-französischer Perspektive*, Member, DAAD, 2017-2019, in a project of the Association “Empire” to organize public discussions “Christian art or Christianity in art”, 2019. He is also a member of the “Academic Circle of Comparative Literary Studies”.

His scientific publications are mainly in the field of history of literature and culture, Christianity, comparative literary studies.

Evaluating the candidacy of Assoc. Prof. PhD Kalin Mihailov “as a whole”, it is necessary to add that he is a writer who participates in public discussions, writes book reviews, is the organizer of anthologies about contemporary Christian lyrics and other projects, as well as the author of poetry collections, novels, and essays.

Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the creative production submitted for participation in the competition.

The two books and the scientific publications presented in the competition, with which Assoc. Prof. PhD Kalin Mihailov participated, can be conditionally grouped into two circles of interests (he subdivides them into 5) - the first circle is related to Christian literature, its place in the ‘big’ literary world, the models of generation, types of Christian works and genres, the Christian novel, the varieties of Christian poetry, etc., in short, this circle deals with the phenomenon of contemporary Christian fiction with its special features and way of functioning.

The second circle is related to the dimensions of religion and the religious in the work of classics of Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian literature (Mikhailovski, Yovkov, Dimitar Petkanov, Kiril Hristov, Dora Gabe, Jan Tvardovski, Dostoevsky, etc.), as well as the understanding and overcoming of the delayed or postponed reception of key writers and the “*adequate ... perception and interpretation in the current Bulgarian socio-cultural environment*” (Mikhailov 2023:12).

Of course, this division is not absolute, because in the article about Dimitar Petkanov, for example, Mihailov deals with sonnet experimentation on Bulgarian soil, and the analysis of works by Kiril Hristov and Dora Gabe tries to outline the contours of the Christian lyrical world.

The first part of the monograph from 2023 focuses mainly on novel works or those through the prism of the novel genre, related to the literary canon. The second part focuses on authors through whom Mihailov traces the development of Bulgarian fiction between the two world wars in relation to the researched topic. At the same time, the emphasis is on the story, and not on the novel, taking in consideration that the writers who are the object of research are indeed masters of this genre.

As he introduces the examined topics, the researcher strives to explain the logic of the birth of his text, outlines a panorama in which dozens of names and works flash, to echo the situations of choice, to outline the face (in the book: *the visage*) of the literary hero (Mikhailov 2023: 224) and to outline the vertical dimension of the world, the notions of “vertical realism” and the transmission of “(non)township”. In the second part of the book, Mikhailov tries to build a bridge between the world heritage of the authors discussed in the first part and the Bulgarian literature of the post-liberation period through the already established concepts of the transmission of (ignobleness) and “vertical realism”, deriving the concept of *homo verticalis* and naming with it the moral personality in the *verticalized* dimension of the world. The researcher justifies the selection of the writers with an internal correction, which interprets the selected authors as “witnesses” of their time. The analysis demonstrates precision and analyticity, the topics that Mihailov considers are really not the subject of frequent consideration, and in this sense, the derivation of three main figures, as he defines them – “*along the lines of the utopian, the heterotopic and the dystopian; of the family and the attitude towards it; of the horizontal and the vertical in human being*” are a valuable contribution. The bibliographies to the texts systematize material not collected in a similar way elsewhere.


The notes I can share, stem from the fact that the researcher has tried to make sense of a vast volume of material and at times the reader gets lost in the meanderings of the author's ideas. Moreover, the very writing of Kalin Mihailov is the writing of a creative person who creates his scientific text as he follows the logic of his internal associative chains. And this is not surprising, because the topics on which Mihailov writes are topics that excite him throughout his scientific and creative career. However, the conclusion of the monograph is conceptual and extremely important.

The second point concerns the presented materials entitled *Scientific contributions of Assoc. Prof. PhD Kalin Mihailov*. With all due respect for the additional creative activity of Kalin Mihailov, I would not include here as a “book chapter” the various prefaces written to

collections of poems, nor would a book review be designated as a “scholarly article” (eg. the wonderful study by the colleague, Kamen Rykev). I attribute this to a technical issue in the output and emphasize that the attached full set of documents is clearly intended to facilitate the jurors and makes a very good impression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the only candidate in the competition for the academic position of “professor”, according to the announced competition, is an active scientist, with clear priorities and scientific results, has a convincing quality of scientific research and volume of scientific production and outstanding scientific and pedagogical potential. In this sense, I strongly suggest to the scientific jury to award the scientific position of “professor” to Assoc. Prof. PhD Kalin Mihailov.

Jury member:

Prof. PhD Magdalena Kostova-Panayotova

July 4, 2023