

## Examiner's Assessment

**By Prof. Amelia Licheva, Doctor of Philology, Sofia University**

on the papers submitted by an applicant in the competition  
for the academic position of *Associate Professor*  
**at Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski**

in the Humanities domain of higher education,  
professional field 2.1., *Philology* (English Literature: Romanticism, Cultural Translation)

An applicant in the Associate Professor competition, as promulgated in the State Gazette, Issue No 31 of 12 April 2019 and on the website of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski to meet the needs of the Department of English Philology under the Faculty of Philology, is Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, a teacher at said Department.

### **1. General information on the procedure and the applicant**

The compilation of hard-copy papers submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, meets the requirements of Plovdiv University's Rules of Academic Staff Development and includes the following documents: diplomas, a certificate of fulfilment of the minimum requirements for the position, a curriculum vitae, detailed research lists, a programme of the study courses led by the applicant, as well as a monograph and articles relevant to the competition.

The applicant, Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, has enclosed one monograph and over 20 articles and essays on the topic elaborated for the attainment of the academic rank concerned, as well as on issues generally related to English and Western literature.

The review of the applicant's documents confirms that she meets all requirements and is eligible to participate in the competition.

### **2. Brief biography of the applicant**

Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD is one of the prominent figures of contemporary English studies in Bulgaria. She is a scholar with a wide range of interests, and an active participant in national and international conferences. The courses of study led by her boast profound and multidirectional curricula and are truly extensive in their scope: from reception and translation to conceptualisations of ages like the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The fact that

her works are frequently (and internationally) quoted also illustrates the prominence of Vitana Kostadinova in the field of English studies.

### **3. General overview of the applicant's work**

Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, is a renowned and authoritative teacher in bachelor and master courses of study, who balances theory with practice in her work. Having supervised a large number of students in developing their master's theses and being a member of a multitude of literary societies, she is among the scholars substantially contributing to translation studies, reception theory and the theory of comparative literature. Her active presence in these scholarly fields is also evidenced by her participation in conferences, many publications and editorial work.

Of particular relevance to this competition are, in their own right, the publications of Vitana Kostadinova, the body of which has been assessed as being of an adequate standard. Below is a brief overview of her published articles, as well as an examination of her monograph submitted with her application in the competition.

I shall focus on the articles on the author who is the centre of attention in Vitana Kostadinova's monograph, Jane Austen. This is not because the rest of her articles make no contribution or outline no important trends in the reception and interpretation of authors such as Byron and Shelley or of ancient playwrights, but because it is namely Austen that has been of particular interest to Ms Kostadinova in recent years. A common feature of those articles is the emphasis on Jane Austen's translations into Bulgarian from the perspective of what Bulgarian readers miss out on due to certain types of translation transformation. Special attention is accorded to the translation of semi-direct speech and the transformations in Bulgarian resulting in alterations in the style and the narrative technique and therefore in a loss of suggestiveness. Another highlight in those articles is the more general overview of the translations of the author's works over the years (including tracing the development of translation versions in case of two or more editions) and linking reception to the translation theory trends of the time. The third – and crucial – highlight is tracing the influence of Austen's novels on feature film and video adaptations, as well as the inspirations based on new-century works popular with readers. In this regard, Kostadinova applies the tools of cultural studies to draw essential conclusions concerning the elevation/popularity correlations and the cultural transitions characteristic of the new century. Finally, due attention has been paid to analysing Austen from the perspective of the reflection of philosophical ideas and the absorption of context in her works. It can therefore be concluded that Vitana Kostadinova not only remains true to Austen's writings and exemplifies their skilful analysis but also succeeds in elucidating why they remained popular in the new century.

The monograph further elaborates on the ideas and approaches outlined in the articles as touched upon above. Beyond that, an element of paramount importance is the targeted exploration, throughout the study, of how different cultures interact with each other, how they are transformed, how they complement each other and how they are rendered in translation. It is no coincidence that Ms Kostadinova builds upon, among others, the studies of Lawrence Venuti and Susan Bassnett. From this perspective, her study is truly exemplary of modern receptionism, wherein descriptive approaches are transcended and receptionism is considered as the product of translation studies and intercultural dialogue. In this regard, I would recommend that the scholar refer to other, Bulgarian, studies along these lines, as instances of them can already be witnessed. Another virtue of the monograph is the exemplified ability to perform interdisciplinary readings, to analyse literary and digital models, and to produce semiotic readings of a kind which particularly enriches the analysis of Jane Austen's works. Importantly, the monograph demonstrates an ability to insightfully show how the author absorbed the ideas of her time into her creative writing and then not only make all those ideas surface through analysis but also trace their transformation in translation, as well as elucidate why Austen was missing in Bulgarian culture for an extensive period of time. The feminist readings of Austen as well as the emphasis on her irony are also worth noting, even more so in the context of some of the most recent studies identifying Jane Austen as a prominent forerunner of modernism. Finally, Ms Kostadinova should also be given credit for the conclusions she draws based on the interconnections between language, translation and narratology.

Based on my analysis of the applicant's monograph and articles, I believe she deserves recognition for her substantial and profound production and her contribution, mostly in the applied field, bridging a vast gap in the Bulgarian reception of Jane Austen and ranking among the best works of Bulgarian literary thought in the field of receptionism and translation studies.

#### **4. Critical remarks and recommendations**

As pointed out above, my most important recommendation would be to accord more attention to the contributions of Bulgarian literary and translation studies, which can only benefit Ms Kostadinova's work.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The documents and papers submitted by Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, **meet all** requirements of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Implementing Rules thereof and the corresponding Rules of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski.

The applicant has submitted a substantial amount of research published following the submission of her papers used for her doctoral defence. The applicant's works feature original research and applied contributions recognised both in Bulgaria and internationally. They are practically applicable, and some of them are intended to be directly used in teaching. The scholarly and teaching qualifications of Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, **are beyond doubt.**

The teaching and research achievements of Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, **fully** correspond to the specific requirements of the Faculty of Philology at Plovdiv University adopted in the context of the University's Rules on the Implementation of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Having made myself acquainted with the papers and research works submitted with the application and having analysed their significance and the research, applied research and applied contributions contained therein, I find it reasonable to give a **positive** assessment and recommend to the Academic Jury to submit a proposal report to the Board of the Faculty of Philology to select Chief Assistant Professor Vitana Kostadinova, PhD, to fill the academic position of Associate Professor at Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski in professional field 2.1., Philology (English Literature: Romanticism, Cultural Translation)

20 July 2019

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