

REVIEW

by Dr. Boyko Penchev Penchev,
Associate Professor at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,
Department of Bulgarian Literature,
of the materials, submitted for the competition
for the academic position of 'Associate Professor'
at the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”

Scholarly field: 2. Humanities

Professional area: 2.1. Philology

Specialty: Bulgarian literature (Bulgarian literature after the First World War)

In the competition for the academic position of “Associate Professor”, announced in the State Gazette, issue. 31 of April 12, 2019 and on the website of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” for the needs of the Department of History of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology, Gergina Vasileva Krasteva from the same department participates as the only candidate.

1. General overview of the received materials

By order № P33-2876 of June 11, 2019 of the Rector of the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski” (UP), I was appointed as a member of the scientific jury of the competition for the academic position of associate professor in the scholarly field “Humanities”, professional area 2.1 “Philology”, announced for the needs of the Department of History of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology, Plovdiv University. For the participation in the announced competition, only one candidate has submitted documents – assistant professor Dr. Gergina Vasileva Krasteva, from the Department of Literary History and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Plovdiv.

The set of paper materials presented by Gergina Krasteva is in accordance with the Regulations for the development of the academic staff of UP. The candidate Gergina Krasteva has submitted habilitation work – (a monograph) and a total of 27 scientific publications, 9 of which are on the topic of the habilitation work.

2. Brief CV of the applicant

Gergina Vasileva Krasteva was born in 1971. She holds a Masters’s degree in Bulgarian Philology

from the Veliko Turnovo University “St. Cyril and Methodius”, acquired in 1994. During the period 2003 - 2006 she was a full-time PHD student at the Department of History of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Plovdiv. She was appointed Senior Assistant in the same department in 2008, and since 2011 she has been Assistant in-chief. Within the period 2009 – 2019 Gergina Krasteva teaches compulsory and elective courses in BA and MA programs at the Faculty of Philology at UP. Her lecture courses include “History of Bulgarian Literature after the Liberation”, “History of Bulgarian Literature after the First World War”, “History of Bulgarian Poetry of the 1960s - 1980s”, “History of Bulgarian poetry - the 90s of the XX century - the beginning of the XXI century”. Under her tuition six graduates successfully defended their MA thesis. She was also an organizer and co-organizer of literary meetings and discussions, book promotions and other literary events with the participation of students, studying in the BA and MA programs at the Faculty of Philology.

3. General characteristics of the applicant's activities

Assessment of educational and pedagogical activity and schooling of the applicant

From the enclosed reference regarding the teaching activity of Gergina Krasteva it becomes clear that from 2009 until now she has been delivering lectures courses fundamentally important for the specialty "Bulgarian Philology"; for example “History of Bulgarian Literature after the Liberation”, “History of Bulgarian Literature after the First World War”, or courses with MA students on the history of contemporary Bulgarian poetry, directly related to the topic of the her habilitation work. Obviously the Department of Literary History and Comparative Literature has every reason to trust the teaching qualities of Gergina Krasteva. A testimony not only to the high professionalism, but also to the general commitment of Krasteva to the cause of the study and socialization of contemporary Bulgarian poetry are the various extracurricular forms with which she stimulated the interest of students - seminars, competitions, surveys, premieres, study excursions etc. Based on the scientific texts of Gergina Krasteva and the references, provided for her teaching and scientific activities, I am convinced that she is a highly valued academic lecturer, respected and loved by the academic staff and the students.

Evaluation of the applicant's scientific and applied scientific activities

My presentation on the applicant's scientific activity will be focused mainly on the habilitation work "Personal and Anthological. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presences in Bulgarian Lyrical Poetry from 2008 to 2017"; then I will move on the publications, falling outside the topic of the habilitation.

The first part of the study, entitled "Contexts, research approaches, attempts at ordering", discusses the theoretical underpinning of the main instrumental concepts - anthology, auto-anthology, personal anthology, with the author drawing on theoretical paradigm, developed by scholars like Bilyana Kurtasheva and Plamen Doynov. The basic idea is that these types of poetry collections have a distinct self-reflective character and the analysis of the selection and conceptual organization in them could bring about important conclusions both for the development of the creative consciousness of a certain author and for the general attitudes in the literary field. The work targets as main fields of research the mechanisms of selection and (auto) editing, used in the preparation of personal and other types of anthologies. "Edit" in the study means "change of titles and paratexts (motto, dedication, author's notes), reconfiguration, transformation or refusal of cyclization, any type of linguistic or style editing, additions or omissions" (p.16). In addition to theoretical reasoning, this part also plays the function of synopsis, correctly outlining the directions in which the study will unfold. There we have not just expressed intentions, but elaboration of the theoretical grounds for the decision of the scholar to examine three types of anthologies - personal, "posthumous" and "generational" anthologies (an example of the latter type is "The Last Poets of the 1980s" (2010), which in 2012 became "The Last 12 Poets of the 80s"). To each of these three types of anthology collections will be dedicated one of the following next three parts of the study.

The second part of the monograph - "Personal Anthologies - Names, Models, Concepts", presents 14 Bulgarian poets with a total of 16 anthology books, published in the period 2008 - 2017. This is also the most extensive part of the research, which is understandable, given the vast array of research material. It should be noted at that point, that Krasteva's approach is unbiased and she analyzes the strategies of self-modeling in these anthologies regardless of the canonical status of the author. To put it more bluntly, the anthological books have been the subject of careful attention not only when they are compiled from/for authors already entrenched in the lyric canon, such as Boris Hristov, Ivan Teofilov, Ekaterina Yosifova, but also when their authors have remained somewhat in the background of the critical interest in the last 30 years, for example poets like Marin Georgiev, Zdravko Kissyov, Valentina Radinska...

In this major part of the study, we cannot fail to note the exceptional meticulousness with which Gergina Krasteva examines the construction of auto-anthologies, and in particular the selection and editing procedures. The transformations of the previous poems of the author in question have been very carefully monitored as they become cycles in the auto-anthology. It is a rare case of detailed knowledge of the Bulgarian poetry from the last forty years, and especially of its conceptualization in books. With some frivolity we could define Gergina Krasteva's method as "interpretive textology". The literary plots she traces are not isolated verbal variations, but are intertwined with biographical

and receptive plots that help us to map the relief of Bulgarian poetry from this period. We should also point out that, although the research is focused on books from the period 2008 - 2017, the anthological nature of these editions obliges the researcher to have proficient knowledge of the Bulgarian poetry from the 1960s to the 1990s - a request, to which Gergina Krasteva responds brilliantly.

There are many valuable contributions in this second part of the study, which probably will become a starting point for future research. I would like to point out the analysis of the replacement of "winchesters" with "carabines" in the poem "Anticipation of Celebration" by Vladimir Levchev (the replacement took place in the 1991 edition of "Sofia Under the Moon", but the old "Winchesters" was restored in subsequent anthologies of the poet). Seemingly small detail, which allowed the researcher to unravel political, aesthetic and biographical layers that speak a lot about the dynamics of the relations between politics and poetry in all these years.

Continuation of the research approach to another type of material we can find in the third part of the monograph - "Selected Writings after the Death or Posthumous Existence of the Poets (Veselin Sariev, Yanaki Petrov, Zdravko Kissyov, Grisha Trifonov, Veselin Tachev, Nikolay Kanchev)". This part addresses the posthumous anthology books that appeared in the period. In this case, the subject of anthological effort is the editor, and the study performs careful textual and literary-historical reconstructions to illuminate both the literary-conceptual and ethical grounds of the compilers. Particularly strong is the sub-chapter dedicated to Grisha Trifonov's anthology, published after the death of the poet, which reveals a number of "liberties" from the editor and raises a number of ethical, conceptual and practical questions about this type of publishing.

This is perhaps the place to point out the exemplar *bona fide* research ethics of Gergina Krasteva. The study builds its observations on carefully verified and verifiable facts; there is no temptation for premature interpretations, based on unreliable sources. This is an exemplary literary study with its rigorous discipline that can teach younger literary scholars (and perhaps even older ones) what responsibility means in the field of literary study.

The fourth part of the monograph - "The first anthologies of the "last poets" - starts with the collective anthology "The last poets of the 80's", but the anthology in question is rather an stepping stone to the analysis of the construction of poetic images of the authors of this generation through their auto-anthology books from the first and second decades of the 21st century. The focus of attention is mainly on the poets Edwin Sugarev, Rumen Leonidov, Vladimir Levchev and Ani Ilkov, since in them the auto-anthologizing (and auto-mythologizing) gestures are most systematic and visible. The study, in a calm and confident way, enters into the most debated topics of the latest Bulgarian literature - the generational and aesthetic groupings, the "waves" or "stages" of the Bulgarian postmodernism. In this part, the work of Gergina Krasteva reveals the potential of the chosen methodological

strategy to shed light on the complex processes of canon formation after 1989. For example there is an important observation that the anthology "The Last Poets of the 80's" includes mainly authors, who not only made their debut in the 1980's, but are also keen on making auto-anthologies, before and after 2010, when their collective anthology collection was published.

In general, the monograph "Personal and Anthological. Auto-anthological models and personal anthological presences in Bulgarian lyrical poetry from the period 2008 - 2017" has undoubtedly high scientific value. It illuminates a completely unexplored aspect of the social life of the contemporary Bulgarian poetry. The observations and the analysis deepen our knowledge not only about the public image of the poets in question, but also about the mechanisms of socialization and canonization, that have been working in Bulgarian literature for the last thirty years.

I just want to suggest, in regard to the future development of Gergina Krasteva's studies, that it would be very interesting to see how the anthologic (self) modeling relates to the established modes of reception of particular author, in other words - to trace how the mechanisms of selection and editing in the compilation of an anthology meet (overturn, correct, confirm) the imposed or competing receptive attitudes toward the author.

The 9 texts on the topic of the habilitation work can be divided into two groups. The first group includes texts that more or less form part of the monograph, being published before its publication; these are texts Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9. I will not comment on them separately, since they are in some form part of the habilitation work. However, serious attention deserve the publications №3 ("Enthusiasm for the Name (or for two contemporary anthologies dedicated to the Apostle and beyond)", №6 ("Wandering in the Forest (or on the occasion of one 1967 publication by Nikolay Kanchev) and №8 ("National Hero's Death Anniversary" (Later uses of the image of Vasil Levski)". Here the text-interpretive approach, used in the habilitation work, is productively applied to objects of different nature - two contemporary poetic anthologies, dedicated to Vasil Levski ("Enthusiasm for the name"), the images of Levski in literature and the official culture of 1960's and 1970s ("National Hero's Death Anniversary") and the specific "adaptation" of motives from two poems by Nikolay Kanchev from 1967 in the poetry of two Plovdiv poets. These articles fully reveal Gergina Krasteva strategic aim to explore the workings of the cultural memory, her ability to trace subtle, but meaningful intertextual threads and motives. What deeply connects her habilitation work with these publications is the researcher's enduring interest in the mechanisms of the literary and cultural memory. It can be said that Krasteva examines two types of memory. The first one is the ideologically modeled "official" cultural memory of the socialist era, while the second is the specific "memory" for the public image of the poet, which is modeled by the author or compiler in the personal anthology. It is no coincidence that the motive for the jubilee appears in the habilitation work, dedicated to au-

to-anthologies. The Jubilee and the Anthology are powerful tools in the striving against oblivion - and Gergina Krasteva shows us how these tools work in both the official ideological culture and the authorial (self) sculpting.

The publications falling outside the scope of the monograph work, but submitted for this procedure are 18 in number. I will not dwell on the journal reviews (Publications Nos. 7, 8, 9, 14 and 18). The first reason is that the candidate has provided enough academic publications for the needs of the procedure and she does not need to supplement them with texts from the discourse of operational criticism, despite the undeniable importance of this type of critical writing, which I personally greatly appreciate. The second and more important reason is that I wish in some way to urge Gergina Krasteva to continue what she has started in her three reviews on Ivaylo Ivanov's books and to expand it into a larger text. Gergina Krasteva, with her experience in the study of anthological projects and her impeccable professional ethics, seems to me the most suitable scholar who can write a book about the poetry of Ivaylo Ivanov - a poet, whose pursuit of conceptuality in his every book of poems was almost like creative religion.

Publications outside the topic of monograph work enrich the scientific profile of Gergina Krasteva. They demonstrate a detailed mastery of literary-historical material, knowledge of both literary and general periodicals from the epoch of the 1960s and 1970s. Gergina Krasteva has an "eye" for intertextual connections, for seemingly small but symptomatic details of the social life of literary texts. I would especially highlight the articles "Paisii at the Front" or how was celebrated the 200th anniversary of "Slavic-Bulgarian History" and "Poetic Art" or the various canon." Based on the analysis of specific literary themes and motifs, they reveal important aspects of the changing literary and conceptual consciousness of Bulgarian literature in the 1960s and 1970s.

Gergina Krasteva is a great connoisseur of the early and late works of the so-called "Quiet poets", which led to the emergence of enlightening texts such as "Quiet Lyrics" - Contexts and Genealogy of the Term" and "In the "Whale's Womb" or "the quiet shout" of the Bulgarian poets in the 1960s and 1970s". I'd stress the contextualization of the concept "Quiet lyrics" and the clarification of its "Soviet" origin. (The "import" of critical concepts and concepts from Soviet literary criticism of the time, far from being unequivocally agreed with the official "line", is a very interesting and under-studied area of the totalitarian literature.) It should be noted that Gergina Krasteva is not only an erudite and disciplined researcher, but she is also able to articulate in an unobtrusive but accurate manner her theses and observations. The meticulous literary and historical exposition often flashes with memorable, spectacular and at the same time insightful expressions, such as "Levchev-Bashev-Slav Karaslavov-Indzhov", the poets with the longest youth in the history of

Bulgarian literature in the totalitarian period..." ("Quiet Lyrics" - Contexts and Genealogy of the Term").

With her research, Gergina Krasteva has contributed a great deal for the clarification of the topic of "alternative canon" in the Bulgarian poetry during the time of totalitarianism. The articles "Ivan Tsanev - Time, Views, Reflections", "The Silent *Light Extravaganza* or How the Executive Committee Sits" and "The Epic of the Unforgettable" - Learning and Constructing the Historical Memory" are valuable works in this direction. It is noteworthy that in most cases the researcher is again focused on specific books, whose conceptual architecture and subsequent revisions provide material for analysis and reflection.

The other texts in the publication package complete the applicant's scientific profile by demonstrating confidence and resourcefulness in researching interesting and vital literary problems. Gergina Krasteva has a strong affinity for tracing images and motifs in the work of one or more authors. Examples include the articles "Birds are Singing" or a lyrical model in poetry from the late 1950s and 1960s, "One Visual Emblem" (the image of glasses in the lyrics of the second half of the 1960s and 1970s) and "Childhood in the Balkans or Peter Pan's Syndrome in Contemporary Fiction in Some Balkan Literatures" (the child-storyteller in several contemporary novels). An interesting text on today's social relevance of the literature is the commentary on a poll "Favorite contemporary Bulgarian authors and books. Reading, reception, literary competitions." Two articles on prose works deal with the image of the Bulgarian and the foreign in different literary and historical contexts - "The Bulgarian James Bond or Mr. Nobody - Some Crime Scenes in Bulgarian Literature" and "Bulgaria - Blind Memory (Artistic Images of Bulgaria through the viewpoint of the foreigner in three contemporary novels)." These seemingly heterogeneous texts are united by the theme of the "gaze", the specific point of view (personal, ethnic, generic) through which the social world and ideological layers are perceived. The high value of the scientific works of Gergina Krasteva is also evidenced by the fact that they appeared in reputable series and editions of the University of Plovdiv and the Department of New Bulgarian Studies at the New Bulgarian University. Two of the articles have been published in prestigious foreign journals, indexed respectively in RINC and ERIH+. The testimony of the significance of Gergina Krasteva's studies are also the numerous citations of her works.

In general, I would define Gergina Krasteva as a literary scholar with her own thematic and methodological approach. Again, I would like to emphasize the philological precision in her research, the attention with which observations and conclusions are being built on the basis of well-researched material. If I allow myself a little loose formulation, I see Gergina Krasteva as combining the best of two schools of literary study: the patient, detailed analytical examination of the "archive" of the literature from the totalitarian period, developed by the colleagues from the Department of New

Bulgarian Studies at NBU, and the ability to detect and track intertextual plots and twists, brilliantly practiced by the distinguished colleagues from the Department of Literary History and Comparative Literature at the University of Plovdiv. I think that Gergina Krasteva has all the scientific, teaching and moral qualities to occupy the position of Associate Professor.

CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Gergina Vasileva Krasteva meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Rules for the implementation of the LDASRB and the corresponding Rules of the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski". The attached information shows that she fulfills the minimum national requirements for occupying the position of Associate Professor.

The candidate has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of her PHD thesis. The applicant's works have original scholarly and practical value that has received international recognition. Some of the papers have been published in journals and collections of international academic publishers. Its theoretical developments have practical applicability, and some of them are directly oriented to the educational work. The scientific and pedagogical qualification of Gergina Vasileva Krasteva is out of doubt.

The results, achieved by Gergina Vasileva Krasteva in the educational and research activities fully comply with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Philology, adopted in connection with the Regulations of the University for the implementation of LDASRB.

After getting acquainted with the materials and scientific works, presented in the competition, I evaluated their importance and scholarly contributions. On this ground, I find it justifiable to give my **positive assessment** and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report - proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philology for the selection of Gergina Vasileva Krasteva for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski" in the Professional area 2.1. Philology, scientific specialty "Bulgarian Literature (Bulgarian Literature after the First World War).

14.09. 2019 г.

Reviewer:

Assoc. Prof. Boyko Penchev