

RECENSION

by Prof. Inna Ivanova Peleva, D.Sc, PhD,

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of the materials submitted for participation in a procedure
for the award of the academic position of **Associate Professor**
at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

in Higher Education Field 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1 Philology (*Bulgarian Literature*
– *Bulgarian Literature after the First World War*)

Under order No P33-2876 of 11.06.2019, issued by the Rector of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, I was appointed a member of the Scientific Jury of the competition for the academic position Associate Professor at the University of Plovdiv in Higher Education Field 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1. Philology (*Bulgarian Literature – Bulgarian Literature after the First World War*). The contest was announced for the needs of the History of Literature and Comparative Literature Department at the Faculty of Philology in State Gazette (No 31 of 12.04.2019, 416/p. 65) and the website of the University of Plovdiv.

One candidate has submitted an application for participation in the announced contest: Senior Assistant, Gergina Vasileva Krysteva, Member of the HLCL Department, Faculty of Philology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

Gergina Vasileva Krysteva was awarded a Master's degree in 1994 in the major *Bulgarian Philology* by the St. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo. From September 1998 to October 2001 she worked as a journalist and an editor at a private print media (Veliko Tarnovo). In the period between 2003 and 2006 she was a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Bulgarian Literature and Theory of Literature (Faculty of Philology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv). In 2008 she defended her graduation thesis on the subject "Aspects of lyrical self-observation in the poetry of the 1970s" after which she was employed as a Lecturer at the History of Literature and Comparative Literature Department (Faculty of Philology, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv). In 2011 she was appointed Senior Assistant. Since 2008, Dr. Krysteva has conducted seminars and lectures in bachelors' programs (full-time and part-time studies) and masters' programs at the Faculty of Philology in a number of compulsory and elective subjects (*Bulgarian Literature from the Liberation to the First World War, Bulgarian Literature after the First World War, Bulgarian poetry of the 1960's – 1980's, Bulgarian poetry of the 1990's – early 21st century, Historical poetics* – seminars). From

the academic year of 2009/2010 to 2018/2019, she was the scientific advisor of six graduate students who successfully defended their master's degrees, as well as a reviewer of over 30 bachelor's degree and master's degree students who successfully defended their graduation theses. She has been a jury member of the annual National Conference of Bachelors, Masters and PhD students, organized by the Faculty of Philology at the university. She was consultant of a participant in the above conference, organizer and co-organizer of study tours, literary meetings, discussions and premieres held by/at the Faculty.

Dr. Krysteva has presented a set of hard copy materials for this contest, which materials are in accordance with the Development of the Academic Staff Regulations of the university and consist of the following documents: application to the Rector for admission to the contest; a CV; a copy of the master's degree diploma; a copy of the doctoral degree diploma; a list of the scientific studies with which she participates in the contest; a reference for compliance with the specific requirements of the Faculty of Philology in such procedures; an annotation of the scientific texts presented before the jury, including a self-assessment of the contributions (in Bulgarian and in English); a statement of authenticity of the attached documents; copies of reports by the DC, FC, and the AC in concern with the contest; a copy of the issue of the State Gazette with the announcement of the contest; a work experience certificate; documents on the candidate's academic and research work (including certificates, confirming forthcoming publications), copies of scientific texts substantiating the application.

Senior Assistant, Gergina Krysteva, provided a habilitation work (published monograph "Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017"; LiterNet, ISBN 978-954-304-439-9, 315 p., Varna, 2019. Its bibliography lists 407 titles, 300 works of fiction, 107 critical texts, talks and interviews). In addition to the habilitation study, the applicant also participates in the contest with 27 other publications (9 of which are defined as "on the topic of the monograph" and 18 concerning other research interests of Dr. Krasteva).

The contents of the monograph "Personally and Anthologically..." is organized into four chapters and a conclusion. The first part of the book ("Contexts, Research Approaches, Arrangement Attempts") deals with the motivations relating to the choice of the academic study subject, outlines the main problems and thematic directions of the search, deliberated by the study, outlines its key methodological presumptions, points to its key methodological presumptions, references to such of fellow literary scholars who relate to the author's own interpretive project.

The second chapter deals with lyrical anthologies by Marin Georgiev, Kalin Donkov, Petar Anastasov, Vladimir Popov, Mirela Ivanova, Valentina Radinska, Miryana Basheva, Boris Hristov, Ivan Teofilov, Ekaterina Yosifova, Yordan Velchev, Vladimir Levchev, Tsotcho Boyadzhiev, Malina Tomova (the chronological principle of the exposition is violated – conceptually justified – only by presenting the 2010' *Life Experience* at the end of the chapter; the other critically commented anthological constructs were published in the period 2011 – 2017).

In the third part of her study, Dr. Krysteva emphasizes on books presenting posthumously the lyrical mark of Veselin Sariev, Yanaki Petrov, Zdravko Kisiov, Grisha Trifonov, Veselin Tachev, Nikolay Kyntchev (and of Bogdan Tetovski and Ruscho Tihov). (Here, the author also draws attention to – and thus “Personally and Anthologically...” turns out to be a study that strikes a balance in at least two semantic concretizations of the concept – artists from outside the capital culture space, who are not among the most persistently themed by today’s critique. Also to those who can no longer work out the “final” image they would have liked to present to the audience.)

In the last (fourth) chapter, she reviews the anthological publications (purely retrospective or compiling “selected and new”) which present the poets Ani Ilkov, Edvin Sugarev, Miglena Nikolchina, Ilko Dimitrov, Rumen Leonidov, Georgi Rupchev, Danila Stoyanova. (This section presents the anthology books of authors who “started out” in the 1980s, which book were published before 2008 – before the bottom time line reviewed in the study. A critical plot with rich potential is also touched upon, which the author is likely to utilize in forthcoming publications of hers: indeed, it is worth commenting in greater detail on the “conversations” between the image of the lyrics generation of the 1980s, validated through a notorious collective book, on the one hand, and the “private” versions of this image articulated in the auto-antologies of the “last poets”, on the other hand).

Not only does the study conclusion synthesize the basic observations and implications shared in the work, but it also outlines additional research paths that could be traced within future critical endeavors – this in itself is yet another argument as to the productivity of the selected perspective on the Bulgarian poetic output of the last two decades.

Even the above quite summarized reconstruction of the content scope of “Personally and Anthologically...” gives an idea of the enormous volume of literary experience the author deals with in the study under consideration. In fact, the lyric books, the lyric texts that Dr. Krysteva uses as a subject of analysis in her study, are much more than the “list” indicated, for example, by the titles of the segments that make up chapter one. Since, by reading lyric auto-antologies

and personal anthologies from the 2008 – 2017 period, Dr. Krysteva returns to the “primary”, “original” poetry collection books (and publications in general), published in the period from the 1960s to the first decade of the 21st century – they are precisely the text proto-matter from which the “current” anthologies are created. The study textual work done deserves respect; the author demonstrates detailed knowledge of the “subject”, literary patience and precision, without which this kind of interpretive project could not be defended. Precisely the textual plan of the study is a particularly significant achievement within the framework of “Personally and Anthologically...” The author traces how previous texts are selected (and which/what of the “old stuff” is left outside the “present”, “last” anthological construction for the relevant author), how the works are arranged and modified (changes can be of most different types: substitution or abbreviation of phrases/verses; rewriting or prefuctionalizing titles; “omitting” dedications; dissolving “established” cycles and building new ones; setting another – different from the original, assumed by the flow of real physical time – sequence of rendering texts in an “one-after-another” perspective, adding new works – they make us look at the already familiar ones from a different angle, inclusion of critical texts in the publication, etc.). This careful reconstruction (the author does not lose sight of the relationship between earlier and later poetic self-representational gestures) achieves an image of personal policies for presenting particular artists at the “moment of recap” while “making sense of the path”. At the same time, Dr. Gergina Krysteva’s monograph intervenes in its own way in an important contemporary debate – the multi-voiced debate in general about the relations between “before” and “now”, the rewriting of the past and the preservation of a (more) true knowledge. The characteristic ethical dimension of the study is tied to the idea of cultural memory (it has such a dimension as well) – in the end of the third chapter of the study the author reminds us that there are no anthologies of poets like Nikolay Tonchev, Kalina Kovacheva, Maria Virhov, Maria Krysteva, Georgi Marinov, Ivaylo Ivanov, Ralitsa Cherneva, Vazken Nalbantyan, Nikolay Gyulev, Stoyanka Grudova (it is clear that in order for such anthologies to appear, one must collect, check, search – possibly in archives, find funds and a publisher, who would introduce the issues in the public domain). In general, this part of the work actually pays attention to the ethical component of the professional literary critic’s work – as if it would be particularly useful for the composers of posthumous anthologies to have such an accurate profile or at least to assist in the preparation of such publications. Because the creation of a (better) posthumous anthology requires not only personal commitment but also preliminary – and certainly competent – serious work (explanatory notes, at least a brief outline of the cultural,

historical and biographical context, chronology of what is shown, etc.; of course, our own sector has its responsibilities, its roles in the care of the living for the dead).

“Personally and anthologically...” reminds us of another kind of responsibility – every now and then an effort must be made to turn the chaos-amorphous excess availabilities of the present into (at least relatively) some order. Dr. Krysteva’s monograph assumes this kind of responsibility, engaging in “mapping” and comprehending (through a “taxonomic instrument” such as an anthology) the colorful and Babylonian controversial Bulgarian literary eventfulness of recent times (not that this choice, as I specified, goes with the refusal of excursions to the previous). Attaching such a difficult and, from a certain point of view, even risky task requires both a willingness to work hard and courage, as well as a genuine attachment to the “subject of study”.

As already mentioned, the applicant has submitted – in addition to the habilitation work – 27 other publications for consideration within the contest. Some of them are thematically related to one or the other part of the monograph “Personally and Anthologically...”; others demonstrate Dr. Krysteva’s diverse scientific interests. Among these publications, particular attention is drawn to the (due to my personal preferences pre-determined by my literary profile), articles interpreting some of the social and post-social functionalities (in various types of writing) of the figure of Levski, as well as the study of the 1962 “anniversary” Paisii (these texts by Dr. Krysteva add valuable details to the vast Bulgarian-language scientific archive on the problem of “literature – nationalism”). The insightful critical pages dedicated to the lyricist Ivaylo Ivanov (I hope they will become the nucleus of a future monograph for this poet died before his time) are a specific part of the production we are discussing. The observations of my colleague on the Bulgarian espionage novel (made in the framework of a co-author’s publication) are also interesting; the “silent” lyrics in our country (anyone who will henceforth deal with this segment of our social literature will benefit from and also refer to the “Silent lyrics – contexts and genealogy of the concept”), on the “The Epic of the Unforgettable” (Ivan Dinkov), on the Peter Pan syndrome as a characteristic theme in some contemporary Balkan fiction works, on the artistic image of Bulgaria in the novels of foreign authors... I will stop listing because it has already become clear how wide the problematic-thematic perimeter of Dr. Gergina Krysteva’s literary studies is.

When it comes to the breadth and scope of the activities, it should be noted that the applicant has participated in two international projects (“The Levski text – read in its own and foreign context”, “Picturesque Bulgaria. Literary Routes”), as well as in the research team developing

the Literature of the PRB Program (New Bulgarian Studies Department at New Bulgarian University), as well as in a number of national and international scientific conferences. In addition, since 2008, Dr. Krysteva has been a contributor to the permanent cover of the Stranitsa Magazine (EN: *Page Magazine*), and since 2018 – a member of the editorial board of the magazine. I should also add that for many years my colleague has been helping to organize and conduct literary premieres, meetings and discussions, promoting contemporary Bulgarian authors, books and periodicals within the Plovdiv Reads initiative; once again a manifestation of a constant commitment to Bulgarian culture and literature is Dr. Krasteva's participation in television formats with an educational and informative profile, as well as her presence on the committee, which annually broadcasts nominations for the Plovdiv Award for outstanding achievements in the field of art and culture, and in the municipal commission, which supports the funding of valuable books by Plovdiv authors and publications relevant to the city. The literary critic and the teacher in Dr. Krysteva are particularly obviously in sync with her initiative within the Dobromir Tonev National Literary Competition which awards an annual student poet award.

I personally know Senior Assistant Dr. Gergina Krysteva as a conscientious and responsible colleague teacher, correct in her relations with others and in the fulfillment of institutional duties, very active and productive in the literary/critical public domain, not only in Plovdiv. The work with students does not end in the classroom for Dr. Krysteva, but continues in non-university formats (book presentations, conversations with writers). I think that the Bulgarian academic community has long recognized Dr. Krysteva as their valuable representative –the regular invitations to participate in university forums and research programs that my colleague receives are representative of this, as well as references in scientific papers that refer to the candidate's publications (a list of citations is attached in the contest documentation).

In **CONCLUSION**, I will emphasize that the documents and materials submitted by Senior Assistant Dr. Gergina Krysteva meet all the requirements of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Regulations for the implementation of the DASRBA, and the relevant Rules and Regulations of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. The applicant has provided a habilitation study and a considerable number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of her doctor's degree. Dr. Krysteva's literary texts, which I considered in my capacity as member of the jury, give productive ideas (announced in their original version in reputable academic forums) and are published in

prestigious specialized periodicals and anniversary collections. Her works are in full scientific circulation and definitely participate in the formation of the current literary idea of the processes, phenomena and personal mark in Bulgarian lyricism from the second half of the twentieth century to the present day. These developments could also be of use to our master's degree students, especially those who are preparing a master's thesis on issues related to that period. Dr. Gergina Krysteva's scientific and teaching qualifications are high without any reservations. The results achieved by the applicant in the academic and research activities are in accordance with the minimum national requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor (see the reference attached by the candidate) and the specific requirements of the Faculty of Philology, adopted in concern with the Regulations of the PU for the implementation of the DASRBA.

Having familiarized myself with the materials and works presented in the competition, I confirm the authenticity, the importance and the contributions to the candidate's studies and give a positive assessment of the scientific and teaching activity of my colleague. I recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury to prepare a proposal report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philology forwarding Dr. Gergina Vasileva Krysteva the academic position of Associate Professor with the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the Higher Education Field 2. Humanities, Professional Field 2.1 Philology (*Bulgarian Literature – Bulgarian Literature after the First World War*).

Plovdiv,
1.09. 2019

Reviewer:

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