

Annotation and Self-assessment

of the habilitation work – monograph

„Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017“ (Publishing House LiterNet, ISBN 978-954-304-439-9, 315 p., 2019)

Annotation and self-assessment of the presented publications

The habilitation work, presented for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor, is a published monograph entitled *“Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017”* (Publishing House LiterNet, ISBN 978-954-304-439-9, 315 p., 2019). The chosen subject is a natural continuation of my lasting scientific interests in the sphere of the history of contemporary Bulgarian literature and of contemporary Bulgarian poetry in particular.

The monograph, the topic of which is the auto-anthological lyrical models of modern Bulgarian poets during the 2008 – 2017 decade, consists of four chapters and a conclusion. In its **first part – “Contexts, research approaches, arrangement attempts”**, the study justifies its interest in view of the specific status of the lyrical book of the type personal/individual/author’s anthology as having a strong self-reflexive nature, as it concentrates the personal selection process of the author and the intent of high representation of the anthological content in a common and complex artistic territory that makes this type of publication a collection of “high aesthetic maximalism”.

The auto-anthological model is discussed in the context of already established research papers (Bilyana Kurtasheva, Plamen Doynov, Svetlozar Igov, Mihail Nedelchev), perceiving it as a result of a certain maturity and personal aesthetic attitudes, as a strong expression of the individual will of the author, as accumulation of the deepening of the process of personal anthological thinking and, in this sense, as an important part of the process of self-understanding of literature based on the “personal canon” that each author creates through one’s personal anthologies. The selection of the chronological perimeter between 2008 and 2017 as a period with a specific nature of “accumulation” of personal anthological publications is also backed with arguments. The list of printed personal anthologies is outlined and their specificity is negotiated by attempting to arrange them according to occasions of different nature. The personal anthological initiative is discussed as a specific form of creative recapitulation and non-finality in the personal aesthetic selection for a certain creative period. The main research approaches through which the work is realized (i.e. literary-historical, literary-critic, and textual) are also justified. The principles of composition of the monograph, the grounds for the arrangement in the following three parts, and the “deviations” from the logic followed are also argued – both in the chronological principle that is leading for the research arrangement as well as in the compliance with certain content-logical contexts.

The **second part of the monograph, “Personal Anthologies – Names, Models, Concepts”**, presents 14 Bulgarian poets with a total of 16 anthology books that appeared in the given period. The principle of arrangement compiles 14 autonomous subparts, each of which deals with a particular author and analyzes the model in which that author has built one’s lyrical anthology of the period. In this part, the researcher’s efforts work on two “levels” – by centralizing the auto-anthologies of the period, the analysis works textually with the literary texts included in them. The close-up textual work performed and maintained throughout this monographic part – both at textual and paratextual level – also takes into account specific creative and biographical “case studies” that have accompanied the fate of anthological texts and books. Thus, the analysis makes an attempt at carefully outlining each personal anthological relief by “negotiating”, on the one hand, the perspective of the single, individual creative work continuously expanding in the actual auto-anthological model, and the swarming pluralism therein, on the other hand. On another level, this implies the need for a broad literary-historical context that has led to a return to the decades of the 1960s and 1970s for further research. It was then that the “sources” of today’s books began to be born with the chosen lyrical books of the self-anthologizing poets in the last decade. The maintenance of the two “levels” of research work tries to productively “take advantage of” the intense communication between them. It is in this communication that the study generates its most useful literary-historical potential.

The third part of the monograph – **“Selected after the death or posthumous existence of the poets (Veselin Sariev, Yanaki Petrov, Zdravko Kisiov, Grisha Trifonov, Veselin Tachev, Nikolay Kanchev)”** which deals with posthumous anthology books which appeared in the specified period, was carried out in similar research perspective. Considering the natural presumption that these editions are the work of a compiler and that the personal will of the author is impossible to be manifested in the preparation of the representative lyrics book, and on the basis of careful textual and literary-historical traces, the study analyzes the anthological posthumously prepared concepts, focusing namely on the role of the compiler. The responsibility of one’s status is thought to be commensurate, on the one hand, with the ethics of an initiative of this nature and, on the other hand, with the relationship that posthumous anthologies have with the processes of literary-historical appreciation and as part of the possible request and/or participation of one creative work in the construction of the contemporary literary canon.

The **fourth part of the monograph – “The first anthologies of the last poets”**, tracks the auto-anthological “biographies” of several poets from the 80s of the 20th century. The title chosen for this part is some sort of a replica to the only collective-generational anthological project for the period, linked precisely to the community of the “lost generation” (M. Nikolchina) – the 2010 anthology “The Last Poets of the 80s”, with a meaningfully “edited” version of the title for its second release in 2012 – “The Last Twelve Poets of the 1980s”. The collective anthology serves as an occasion for a certain recollection of literary-historical contexts in which the generational format turns out to be a working research tool. However, along with this it is also sufficiently contradictory in relation to the grounds that the personal anthology project of each of these poets to be made in the period 2008 – 2017 in a fixed connection with the “list base” of the generation. In other words, despite the

commitment of one author or another with a research construct such as the literary generation that is so rich in opportunities, it turns out that, in a particularly paradoxical way, generational lists are the “alibi” of the difficulty with which the auto-anthological density during the research period is susceptible to such typologization.

In the **last part of the monograph, titled “Instead of Conclusion”**, summaries are generated from the research work and the possible prospects for continuing research reading of auto-anthological artistic models are outlined. Such a reading, taking advantage of the ever-increasing time-span over the researched period, can generate intriguing typological references and foster specific forms of literary-historical periodization associated with both the arrangements of personal presence and the overall literary field in the period of the first two decades of the 21st century.

The monograph contains 315 pages and covers 407 bibliographic titles, of which 300 are fiction and 107 are critical texts, conversations, and interviews.

Self-assessment of the habilitation work – monograph:

The monograph *„Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017“*, presented in its capacity of habilitation work, is the first attempt for the period of a very recent decade, between 2008 and 2017, to be studied through topics, related to the auto-anthological lyrical books of the period. In Bulgarian literature there are studies dealing with collective anthologies in the history of Bulgarian literature from the first half of the last century, separate studies on collective and authors’ anthologies from the decade of the 1990s, as well as individual articles on the topic of the period from the beginning of the new century. The monograph *„Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017“*, taking into account and relying on what has already been written in the field of research, also works with and covers a new and unexplored period, with a special degree of scientific risk, due to the selection of a decade that is quite current in relation to this day.

In the context of its research theme, the monograph builds an arch of complete and in-depth personal anthological presence of nearly 30 contemporary Bulgarian living and dead poets, outlining the specific dynamics in the formation of their anthological models. Through the support of personal and posthumously prepared anthologies from the period under review, the poetic work of the authors is carefully traced and subjected to in-depth textual and analytical observations deployed in the context of several literary-historical decades. Separate observations of this kind have already been made in the contemporary Bulgarian literary studies, but for the first time the creative works of the studied poets is reconstructed in such detail in the chronological perspective of movement from their individual lyrical books to their auto-anthological projects. In the course of the research, a specific, subject-oriented, literary-historical context is constructed, against which some unknown or not very publicized details of the creative biography of some of the researched books and texts are highlighted.

A particular emphasis in the monographic text is placed on the tracking of the posthumous anthologies of the period. The insistence on the special status of the compiler of

this type of publication is accompanied by the presentation of several different types of compilation practices representative of the anthological model of “aesthetic maximalism” or problematizing it in one or another of its areas. But both posthumous anthologies and auto-anthologies as a manifestation of a “personal canon” relate to canon-forming processes in the general literary process. Therefore, a detailed and consistent outline of personal anthological field in the most recent Bulgarian poetry would be at least necessary and useful empirical resource in future literary-historical arrangements and processes of aesthetic evaluations. In this respect, a recent fact is worth noting, namely that the lyrical texts and authors studied in the monographic work (Ivan Tsanev, Ani Ilkov, Zlatomir Zlatanov, Georgi Rupchev, Georgi Gospodinov) are already part of the discussion rubrics in the general textbooks in literature, prepared according to the requirements of the new curricula of the Ministry of Education and Science.¹

Although part of the research carried out in the monograph is unlikely to be of interest to the reader/admirer of contemporary Bulgarian poetry, it could still be considered a useful “investment” in the literary-historical scientific knowledge. Because – if we are to allow ourselves to make such an assumption – our literary history, while building a complete cultural memory for the first decades of the 21st century, could also be based on studies working in the field of today’s modernity, without letting go of the thread of the nearby past. Such studies are peculiar and difficult to predict as far as their results are concerned, but are still a guarantor of the fact that, among the authors and books that have attracted their attention, the literary-historical knowledge will not fail to carefully see and mark those whose anthological pages in decades will be thought not only with respect, (but perhaps) also with a particularly high status in the hierarchy of national literary values.

Annotation and self-assessment of the presented publications:

Nine (9) of the presented publications are marked as “**Publications on the topic of the monographic work**”. They represent independently written articles or accounts on the topics covered in the monograph, extending or elaborating on different content details from the subject matter of the research monograph. Two of these publications: „*The Death Anniversary of the National Hero (Late Uses of Vasil Levski’s Image: Socialist Fiction, Socialist Press and Beyond Them)*” (2019) and „*Exaltations about Name: or, Two Contemporary Anthologies Dedicated to the Apostle and Beyond Them*” (2018), also present an extended researcher’s perspective on the functioning of the thematic collective anthology in the context of the topic of nationalism in contemporary Bulgarian literature. These texts deal with some uses of Vasil Levski’s image during communist and post-communist decades

¹ See Literature for the 8th grade, Student’s Book (by A. Hranova, L. Boyadzhiev, L. Shishkova), Sofia, Prosveta, 2017); Literature for the 9th grade, Student’s Book (by A. A. Hranova, L. Boyadzhiev, L. Shishkova), Sofia, Prosveta, 2018; Literature for the 10th grade, Student’s Book (by A. Hranova, L. Shishkova), Sofia, Prosveta, 2019.

in Bulgaria – in fiction, periodicals and contemporary thematic anthologies. The article “*Exaltations about Name: or, Two Contemporary Anthologies Dedicated to the Apostle and Beyond Them*” (2018) was presented as a report and discussed with particular interest at the International Scientific Conference dedicated to the 180th anniversary of the birth of Vasil Levski, held in December 2017 in the City of Karlovo (Bulgaria).

The article „*Personal and Anthological: or, Some Observations about Author’s Lyrics Anthologies in Contemporary Bulgarian Poetry in the Period 2010 – 2017*” was scientifically reviewed and published in STEPHANOS – a reviewed multilingual scientific journal of the Philological Faculty at the Lomonosov Moscow State University and has already attracted the interest of scientists exploring contemporary Bulgarian literature.

In the “**Other publications**” section, the articles printed in magazines and collective volumes are on topics dominated by research interest in contemporary Bulgarian literature from the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Some of them are linked to thematic publishing initiatives (for example, “*Favorite Contemporary Authors and Books. Reading, Reception, Writing Contests*”, 2016), others are part of successfully realized international projects (“*Bulgarian James Bond or Mr. Nobody – several criminal plots in Bulgarian literature*”, 2016, by M. Panova and I. Georgieva). The article “*In the Whale’s Womb or the Silent Outcry of the Bulgarian Poets of the 60s and 70s of the Twentieth Century*” (2014) was published in the prestigious Slavic literary Polish magazine *Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne*.

Some of the publications were initially presented as reports and discussed at national and international scientific forums. The text “*Silent lyrics – Contexts and Genealogy of the Term*” was presented as a plenary report and discussed in the framework of the National Scientific Conference “*Silent Lyrics in Bulgarian Literature*” (Veliko Tarnovo, 2015) with explicit findings of valuable contribution to the topic. Versions of the following articles are also presented as reports: “*1968: A Visual Emblem*” (2009), “*Epic of the Unforgettable – Absorption and Construction of Historical Memory*” (2009), “*Childhood in the Balkans or Peter Pan Syndrome in Contemporary Fiction of Some Balkan Literatures*” (2009), “*Bulgaria – Blind Memory*” (2010), “*Birds are Singing or a Lyrical Model in the Poetry of the Late 50s and 60s of the 20th Century*” (2012) and “*Paisiy at the Front or How the 200-year Anniversary of Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya is Celebrated*” (2013).

The articles titled, respectively, “*The Wedding Songs about Love, Irony and Sarcasm of Ivaylo Ivanov*”, “*Flight over a Frozen Lethe*” and “*The Gift of the Unabating Pastoral*”

Awakeness”, published in the specialized electronic journal *LiterNet*, are analytical insights into three lyrical books by the contemporary Bulgarian poet Ivaylo Ivanov, which appeared in the period 2008 – 2013. The critical interpretations made in the articles are related to some of the observations in the monograph “*Personally and Anthologically. Auto-anthological Models and Personal Anthological Presence in the Bulgarian Lyrics of the Period 2008 – 2017*” (2019), but they could also serve as a useful research perspective for any future monographic study on the lyrics of Ivaylo Ivanov.

Two of the presented articles are published in collections compiled to honor some contemporary Bulgarian literary critics – “*Poetic Art or the Many-Faced Canon*” (2012) in a collection in honor of Prof. Svetlozar Igov, and “*The Posthumous Life of the Author or, Three Lyrical Anthologies*” (2019) in a collection in honor of Assoc. Prof. Atanas Buchkov.

The presented publications are literary-historical and literary-critical articles, the subject of which is primarily concerned with the history of Bulgarian literature from the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Some of them also attempt at gaining research insight into the novel of contemporary Balkan literature or offer research observations with interdisciplinary nature. The publications present an insistent, long-lasting and consistent work in the scientific field of the history of Bulgarian literature from the middle of the last century and the first decades of the 21st century.

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