

## R E V I E W

by prof. Dr. Sc. Milena Kirova, University of Sofia

of the documents presented at the procedure for habilitation as a professor

at Plovdiv University, Faculty of Philology

in the Field 2. Humanities, professional subfield 2.1. Philology (Bulgarian literature, Bulgarian literature after World War II)

The only candidate for the academic position “professor”, announced in State Newspaper N 40 from 14. 05. 2021, also on the official site of Plovdiv University, and to be vacant at the Department of History and Comparative Studies of Literature, is associate-professor, Dr. Sc. Tatjana Ichevska, employed by Plovdiv University at the same department.

### **I. Overview of the Presented Documents**

The set of documents presented by the candidate is in full accordance with the Guidelines for development of the academic staff at Plovdiv University.

It contains the following documents:

1. Professional CV;
2. Proof of being registered as member of the Plovdiv University academic staff;
3. List of publications linked to the current procedure;
4. A certified notice of accomplishment of the minimal requirements for research and teaching activity in order to acquire professorship.
5. Annotations of the research materials presented – in Bulgarian and English;
6. List of contributions of the research – in Bulgarian and English;
7. Certificates for acquiring Ph. D., Dr. Sc., and associate-professorship;
8. Proof of teaching activities;
9. Request to the Rector of Plovdiv University to be admitted to the procedure.

Associate-professor Tatjana Ichevska participates in the procedure with 21 pieces of research, including a volume of articles entitled “Bulgarian Literature: Stories, Contexts, Studies”, and 20 articles most of which have been included in the above-mentioned volume.

## **II. Short Bio of the candidate**

Ass. Prof. T. Ichevska is employed by Plovdiv University on a full-time teaching basis, at the Department of history and comparative studies of literature, since 1994. She is lecturing in Bulgarian literature after World War I at different B. A. programs since 2007. She is also teaching in the M. A. Program “Methods of teaching Bulgarian language and literature”. She has participated in eight research projects; supervised over eighty B. A. and M. A. theses; she also supervised one Ph. D. student who successfully defended her dissertation in 2020.

## **III. Professional Overview of the Candidate**

For the last twenty-five years Dr. Sc. Tatjana Ichevska proved to be an active and professionally efficient member of her department. Her research and teaching qualities are significant contribution to the progress and the high reputation of the department.

Tatjana Ichevska’s teaching activity has been highly appreciated by her colleagues and by the students. It is characterized by distinct professionalism and excellent pedagogical approach.

As well as being a historian of Bulgarian literature, Tatjana Ichevska has contributed to contemporary Bulgarian literature as an active critic of newly published books. Since 1997 she wrote over eighty reviews in prestigious journals, such as “Page” and “Letera”. She took part in the compilation and editing of sixteen volumes of scientific research.

## **IV. Contributions of the Major Research Presented at the Procedure**

The major work presented by Ass. Prof. T. Ichevska is a collection of articles and studies written in the course of two decades. The volume is composed thematically, containing two parts, each of them encompassing five to eight distinct texts. Although written in different times and on different topics, the texts are selected through the prism of the author’s interest in the ethical dimensions of human existence.

The first part of the volume (“Temptation and Redemption”) consists of five articles which discuss, in different literary works written by different Bulgarian writers, historically specific views of the Woman and femininity in Bulgarian literature. The traditions of Bulgarian folklore are often commented as a source of popular views on femininity, and a specific “archive” of feminine imagery. Literary women are revealed as psychological crossroads of ethical themes, such as sin and seduction, in relation to the necessity of redemption according to literary ethics followed by male writers in various epochs.

The paper which is entitled „The Slavic Woman as Mirrored in Bulgarian Literature”, is of specific interest; its subject is very rarely, if at all, discussed by critics of Bulgarian literature. The author draws a typology of femininity on the basis of national identity. Literary images of Russian, Czech, Polish, and Serbian women are discussed in this article, all of them being first and foremost

representations of popular views and prejudices at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The research topic of the last article in this part is also innovative: „The Golgothas of Bulgarian „Queens”. “Queens” in this case does not refer to real, biographically documented women. The “queens” Tatjana Ichevska comments, are symbolic, produced by means of literary representation and/or collective cultural memory.

The second part of the volume – “Worlds, Desires and Sufferings” – consists of six texts on diverse topics. The first and the second of them are very long, they are not articles but full-fledged studies according to both their volume and their thematic range. The first one for example („Flying with an Angel’s Feather”) reads the literary work of Angel Karalijchev from a new point of view. Tatjana Ichevska assumes that Karalijchev obsessively revives and reworks images and motifs of his early-written works in his late collections of stories. That way he articulates a number of constant motifs and problems, all of them of ethical nature: sin, pardon and punishment, death and problematics of post-mortem existence.

The third, fourth and fifth articles of this part („Capital and Countryside in Dimitar Dimov’s Novels”, „Authorities’ and ‘Sinners’ in Emilian Stanev’s Prose”, „Punishment in Emilian Stanev’s Novels”) are focused on two Bulgarian writers, who have long been an object of T. Ichevska’s research interest: Dimitar Dimov and Emilian Stanev. Yet, the articles elaborate topics never discussed before, and problems, which have never been an object of close interpretation by Tatjana Ichevska herself.

I would like to pay special attention to one of the articles in this part of the volume: „The Labor Camp Heterotopia: Observations on the novels *The Camp of Loose Women* by Anton Balazs and *Calm, White Danube* by Atanas Lipchev”. Anton Balazs is vaguely known (if known at all) in Bulgaria though his novel *The Camp of Loose Women* was translated in Bulgarian. The other writer on focus, Atanas Lipchev, is also not popular though his novels deserve more attention on the part of literary critics and historians of Bulgarian literature.

The third part of the volume – “Viewpoints: (In)congruities” – is different from the previous two parts because of its methodology. It consists of eight articles, all of them strictly based on a large quantity of historically documented facts. Factology dominates literary interpretation in these texts. This makes their contributions very well motivated and logically convincing.

Some of the articles in the third part („The Third Edition. Yovkov’s Short Story ‘The Harvester’ and Its Slovak Translation, „Yovkov’s Short Stories: Editions and Re-editions”) are dedicated to Ichevska’s most favorite Bulgarian writer: Yordan Yovkov, though from new and little explored points of view.

## **VI. Summary of the Scientific Contributions**

The volume, presented at the procedure, consists of nineteen articles and studies on diverse research topics. All of them contribute to the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Bulgarian literature; the author raises a number of questions scarcely debated by Bulgarian critics thus far. (I have already discussed them in detail above); Dr. Sc. Tatjana Ichevska offers assumptions steadily based on broad information and profound analysis.

I would like to point out that these articles do not repeat the thematic contents and the interpretation already made in the two books, which were presented at the preceding procedures – the one for associate professorship, and the other for becoming Doctor of Sciences. The works included in the current volume prove that their author is a scientist with established and distinct presence in the studies of Bulgarian literature. They exhibit the author's knowledge of Bulgarian history, her clear-cut analytical approach to literary issues, and innovative reflections on various topics.

The quantity requirements for the academic position “professor” are being accomplished.

Associate-professor T. Ichevska is a nationally acknowledged researcher who took part in international scientific forums and contributed to the development of Bulgarian-Slovak literary relations.

## **VII. Personal Impressions**

In the course of twenty years, I have personally observed a significant part of Ichevska's professional performance. In my opinion, she is a very serious, considerate, and consistent researcher of Bulgarian literature.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

Having read all the documents and research materials presented at the procedure, I am convinced in the high distinction with which I assess the candidate's work.

I suggest to the Scientific Panel of this procedure to report to the Faculty Board of the Philological Faculty of Plovdiv University a report that Associate professor Dr. Sc. Tatjana Ichevska should be awarded the academic position “professor” in Professional field 2. 1. Philology (Bulgarian literature – Bulgarian literature after World War I).

