

## **REVIEW STATEMENT**

**by Professor Dr. Habil. Cleo Stefanova Protohristova,**

**Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski**

on the documents submitted in application for the open position of

**Professor at The Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv**

**in the Sphere of HE 2. Humanities; Area of professional qualification 2.1. Philology**

**Bulgarian Literature after the First World War)**

Following Order № P33 – 3117 of 12. 07. 2021 r. of the Rector of Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski, I have been appointed a member of the academic review board for the open competition for the academic position of **Professor in Bulgarian Literature after the First World War**, which was opened for the needs of the Department of Literary History and Comparative Literature within the Philology Faculty at Plovdiv University and announced in the *State Gazette*, issue 40 from 14.05.2021.

The sole applicant for the open position is Tatiana Ivanova Ichevska, Associate Professor, Dr. Habil at the department which has announced the vacancy. The applicant is a graduate of the University of Plovdiv, where she studied Bulgarian philology. After receiving her master's degree (in 1993), she studied also Slavic philology and graduated with a second MA (in 1996). In 1999 she defended her PhD dissertation “Fuctional and Semantic Aspects of the Mythical in New Bulgarian literature”. Since 1995 until the present Tatiana Ichevska has been teaching at the University of Plovdiv. The stated pedagogical portfolio comprises lecture courses in Bulgarian Literature (Bulgarian Literature after WWI), Anthropology of Slavs and other Literature BA and MA courses. In 2007 she received her first habilitation as an Associate Professor.

Tatiana Ichevska is not only an admirable lecturer, she has also exceptionally supportive to her students' education as a supervisor of a significant number of excellent MA thesis. She also supervised a PhD student who defended successfully her dissertation in 2020. Tatiana Ichevska is also a remarkably devoted participant in the faculty activities, especially in the organization of the annual national students' conference.

The documents submitted by the applicant are impeccably ordered, accurate and testify to her responsible attitude to her own academic achievements -- both teaching and scholarly. For the purposes of this competition she has presented a monograph published as a book and 19 scholarly papers. The appended table containing the academic metric indexes shows that she fully observes all the general and specific requirements for the academic position of Professor and confirms yet again the legitimacy of the application.

The publications reveal a consistent interest in a clearly delineated set of scholarly pursuits and issues, that is to say, about the dissatisfaction with reality forcing one to repudiate the social roles and norms imposed by tradition, about the individual crucified in between one's appurtenance to a certain community and the impulse to personal authenticity, and finally, about the existential crisis, arising from experiencing the trials of critical situations. Logically enough, it is the habilitation work that serves as the gravitational center for the application, all the more so because the rest of the publication activity of the candidate is narrowly connected to the topic and the contents of the monograph. It also to a great extent overlaps with it on the textual level. Having brought together the well delineated and steady scholarly interests of the author as well as her long-standing efforts, the monograph ***Bulgarian Literature: Stories, Contexts, Studies*** includes different texts concerned with model narratives of various aspects of human life as presented in Bulgarian literature after the First World War, namely the difficulties in the process of individuation, the painful interrogation of ethical principles and legal norms, the ordeals and agony of social adaptation. In parallel to these attempts for the rationalization of the specific modes in which contemporary Bulgarian literature interprets the enumerated fundamental human issues, a second research trajectory is carried out in the monograph. Following the principle

*habent sua fata libelli*, the author explores the reception of exemplary Bulgarian literary texts analyzing the process of publishing and republishing presupposed by shifts in the ideological and the artistic paradigms, as well as the process of translation of those texts into foreign languages or to another media (cinema and the art of painting).

I feel inclined to identify the best achievements of the book predominantly in this part of the research. The analysis of publishing strategies towards Iovkov's works and the dynamics of their subsequent editions empowers enlightening deductions about the impact of the historical transformations of contextual frames on the publishers' and editors' choices and about the specific manifestations deriving from those different cultural contexts. I also identify the scholarly contributions of the author in her focus on the interrelations between literature and fine arts, manifested in the reading of Iovkov's texts suggested by the illustrations to their different editions. Admiration deserve the observations on the construction of verbal pictures in the military stories of the writer, practically unprecedented in Bulgarian literary studies. The same methodological paradigm follows the analysis of book covers of the editions of Dimitar Dimov's novels taking into consideration their effect on the reader response frames. Again as commendable command over underdeveloped research areas I would evaluate the analyses carried out on the screen adaptations of D. Dimov's „Tobacco” and “Damned Souls” and E. Stanev's “The Peach Thief”, representative of Bulgarian cinema, which result in the identification of a model strategy for the translation of literary classics into the cinematographic language.

Giving preference to the second research trajectory does not imply underestimation of the achievements available on the territory of the other, specifically literary interpretations presented in the monograph which stand out for the the impressively wide-ranging research issues resulting inevitably in a certain centrifugation, impressive insights about underrated or practically not researched issues. This is valid especially for the part entitled ***Worlds, Desires and Sufferings*** in which texts such as „The Labor Camp Heterotopia: Observations on the novels *The Camp of Loose Women* by Anton Balazs and *Calm, White Danube* by Atanas Lipchev”) and

„Capital and Countryside in Dimitar Dimov’s Novels” suggest unexpected and illuminating interpretative optics.

Having acquainted myself with the materials and scholarly publications submitted for the purposes of this position, I am convinced of their importance and the scholarly contributions entailed in them with regard to their theoretical, scholarly, and pedagogical merits, therefore I find it expedient to confirm my overall positive assessment, as expressed above, and to recommend to the Scholarly board to prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Philology Faculty for the selection of Assoc. Professor Dr. Habil Tatiana Ivanova Ichevska, for the academic position of Professor at the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv in the Sphere of HE **2. Humanities**, area of professional qualification **2.1. Philology (Bulgarian Literature after the First World War)**, and I would gladly vote for the confirmation and in favor of this proposal.

September, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021

**Reviewer:**

Prof. Cleo Protohristova, Dr. Habil.