

## REVIEW

by Prof. Nikolay Chernokozhev, PhD and DSc, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

of the materials submitted for participation in the competition

for the academic position of "associate professor"

at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski",

in: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, (Bulgarian Literature – Renaissance Literature and Folklore) in the competition for "associate professor" announced in the State Gazette, issue 96 of 11.11.2025, and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of History of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology, with Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" participating as a candidate.

By Order No. ПД-22-47 of 09.01.2026 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU), I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" at PU in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. Philology, (Bulgarian Literature – Renaissance Literature and Folklore), announced for the needs of the Department of History of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Philology.

Only one candidate has submitted documents for participation in the announced competition:

Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The set of materials presented by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev in electronic format and on paper complies with the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff at PU and includes all documents required by the competition procedure.

The colleague has attached his scientific works: 2 monographs/books and a list of 15 articles and scientific research projects.

## Brief biographical information

The candidate, Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev, has linked his scientific and teaching career with Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski."

In Zdravko Dechev's study "AROUND THE DEAD BODY: Stories from the Renaissance" (Plovdiv: Janet 45. 2026), the dead body is perceived, examined, and evaluated as the focus of a wide range of issues.

The ten parts cover basic texts of Bulgarian Renaissance literature – from Sofronii to Botev, but the chronology of the changing semantic scope is different and unfolds from Naiden Gerov's Stoyan and Rada to Neda Antonova's book *The First After God. The Love and Death of Vasil Levski*.

The work is based on a serious theoretical foundation, and the directions of interpretation signal the potential for expanding the scope of texts that may attract the attention of the researcher.

What is innovative is not only the choice of research subject, but also the approaches, steps, insights into the specific textual resources, and the realization of THE DEAD BODY.

The monograph begins with the intersection of the paths of marriage and death, with the clash of positions and wills in the patriarchal world. The inscriptions on the dead body penetrate the plot, its value and significance – the same happens in the second chapter, based on the field of "intimate poetry popularized by Petko Slaveykov".

The body of the slave, which is not its own (118), is placed in various fields of research – thus the scope of the study masters and assimilates the individual human bodily cosmos. But the body is not only torn apart and destroyed. It is preserved in the words that are spoken, in the pages that are written. The excessively destroyed body is a character, albeit peripheral, independent and significant, especially in the works of Lyuben Karavelov.

But the beginning for the Bulgarian public is set by "The Sacrificial Child: Excess by Vasil Drumev ("Unfortunate Family")". The researcher does not develop the plot in many directions (the roasting of a child's body on a spit is found not only in song folklore, but also in Sofronii Vrachanski's "Appeal to the Bulgarian People" – "Do you not know ... how many of your children were roasted

on your own spits"), his gaze is directed towards the consolation expressed in the finale of the section – "Consolation, which we would add to with the exclamation: 'Welcome to the afterlife!'. (82)

I quote the final sentence because it brings together writing and voice. And these are important figures in Zdravko Dechev's research

In Vasil Drumev's first novel, there are many dead bodies – most of them consumed by fire, but also beheaded, impaled, torn apart, and above them all shines the sacrificial body of a child, which introduces the misfortunes.

The shirt is a central figure in the studies of my colleague Dechev – not so much the shirt of memory, the shirt that absorbed the story and tears in Zhinzifov's "Кървава кошуля" (The Bloody Shirt); this shirt gives impetus to the life of the song, in the singer's final "oath," and the shirt in its complex, semantically two-way presence in the existence of Bulgarians.

Death and the shirt create a bridge to the world of two of Botev's poems – "To My First Love" and "Pristanala," which are read through an original lens.

I do not know whether my colleague Dechev was inspired in choosing the title of his study by the title of one of the key chapters in the novel "Under the Yoke" - "Around a Corpse." It seems to me that this chapter combines many of the themes of the Bulgarian Renaissance and shows a transformation of the traumatic elements of the therapeutic narratives into the firm conviction of the people gathered around the corpse in the inevitable success of the cause.

"Death is, in Botev's words, foreshadowed with a 'gentle smile' ('To My First Love') and the body is not only the arena of a spectacular display of cruelty before... and after death." (172)

With these words, the author returns the reader to the epigraph from "The Magic Mountain," i.e., to life.

Despite some minor omissions, I remain hopeful that this field of research will be explored to its full potential.

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This book actively communicates with "Orality and Literacy in Renaissance Culture (Phenomenology of the Bulgarian Voice)" (Plovdiv: Janet 45. 2014), and the two are in a productive mode of complementarity.

The articles listed in the bibliography further outline the profile of an innovatively thinking colleague who carries out significant research projects.

## CONCLUSION

The documents and materials presented by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB, and the relevant Regulations of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The candidate in the competition has presented a sufficient number of scientific papers published after the materials used in the defense of the doctoral thesis. The candidate's works contain original scientific and applied contributions, which are concisely and modestly outlined in the seven points of the "Self-assessment of contributions" (document N 9) – which have received recognition, with a representative part of them published in journals and scientific collections issued by significant academic publishers. His theoretical developments have practical applicability, with some of them directly oriented towards teaching. The scientific and teaching qualifications of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev are beyond doubt.

The results achieved by Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev in his teaching and research activities fully comply with the minimum national requirements adopted in connection with the Regulations of Plovdiv University for the application of the Higher Education Act.

After reviewing the materials and scientific works submitted in the competition and analyzing their significance and the scientific, scientific-applied and applied contributions, I find it reasonable to give my positive assessment and to recommend that the Scientific Jury prepare a report proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philology for the election of Senior Assistant Professor Dr. Zdravko Trifonov Dechev to the academic position of "associate professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in: field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional direction 2.1. Philology, (Bulgarian Literature – Renaissance Literature and Folklore)

06.03. 2026 Reviewer:

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(signature)

Prof. Nikolay Chernokozhev, PhD and DSc

(academic degree, name, surname)