

REVIEW

of Greta Stefanova Haralanova – Rzsukanova’s doctoral dissertation
“Haralan Angelov – Poetics and Civic Ideas” submitted for public defense towards the obtaining
of the higher education and academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy, professional field 2.1
Philology (Theory and History of Literature)

by Professor Albena Kirilova Vacheva, Dr. Habil., South-West University “Neofit Rilski”

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The doctoral dissertation titled “Haralan Angelov – Poetics and Civic Ideas” is 441 pages long and has been structured in five chapters, introduction and conclusion, and bibliography. Formally, the dissertation is in conformity with the rules and requirements regulating the composition of a text of this kind. With regard to method and disciplinary scope, it can be said that the results of the conducted research have been presented with great clarity and precision and what deserves to be pointed out are the conclusions drawn and summarized at the end of each individual chapter. All this is good grounds on which to state from the very beginning that the dissertation is an instance of an excellently completed dissertation project of recognizable contribution value.

Evidence in support of the above statement is found both in the clearly formulated thesis and all of the core hypotheses which have determined the character of Greta Rzsukanova’s research work. In order to fully complete the stated aim and related objectives, the dissertation author has appropriately selected the methodological toolkit best suited to the purpose of revealing the depths of the Haralan Angelov archive – a task which is not only related to the obligatory literary-historical procedure for determining the author’s contributions with factographic precision, but which has also led to the digitization of the author’s heritage in Chapter 5 of the dissertation. In the latter part of the dissertation, 11 archival documents have been included, some of which newly discovered, poems and documents containing information about Haralan Angelov as “a poet, composer and

numismatist” (p. 410). To these artefacts, descriptions of high precision have been added identifying the sources and collections where they have been found while the texts themselves have been subjected to in-depth analysis. The achieved results make a significant contribution to the comprehensive presentation of the work of the studied author, but they also reveal the degree of excellence to which Greta Raszukanova has developed her professional expertise and skills for performing literary-historical analysis by using archival documents.

The other methods prominent in the research are the comparative historical method, as well as some other approaches which have made it possible for the dissertation author to broaden the analysis and to include the perspective of the culturological context or to unfold the psychological depth and reveal the “uniqueness of thought” of the discussed author. The scope of the analytical procedures has increased the relevance of the research and has enriched the literary historiography with names, which have otherwise remained in the periphery or outside of the national literary memory.

The change of one epoch with another – in this case the Revival with the advancing modernity – made “comprehensible”, from the point of view of the methods dominating the modern Bulgarian literary studies, the tendency for pushing figures like Angelov to the periphery. Chapter 1 of the dissertation is focused specifically on the question of the literary canon construction. “School poetry”, the author’s administrative and political commitments, the absence of the sacralization of the native and of revolutionary exaltation are in this chapter discussed as among the reasons explaining why he was forgotten. As well as bringing to the foreground the author’s contributions, this chapter also features the application of specific revisionary activities on some existing analytical constructs which have cemented and made indestructible the author – epoch relation. One of the merits and contributions of the dissertation is the confidence with which it suggests the possibility of questioning the already-mentioned relation of dependence and the suggests an approach that can legitimize, from a literary-historiographic perspective, the research interest in such authors and their work. What all has to be mentioned at this point is the close alignment of the research with the work of the doctoral dissertation supervisor, Assoc. prof. Yordan Evtimov, who has for a long time been consistently working toward laying bare the methodological deficits in the techniques of historicising literature and their epistemological motivations.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation reveals those merits of Haralan Angelov's lyric poetry which were the reason for his being relegated to oblivion. The specifics of his poetry's aesthetics and ethics have here been consistently and methodically presented and explained in a manner facilitated and influenced by the study of the author's character by means of the psychoanalytical and psychobiographical methods. It is this latter choice of methods that has made the work possible (insofar as a toolkit is necessary that can replace the reductionist techniques in the field of literary studies) on the one hand, and of extremely high contribution value, on the other. In the analysis, individualization dominates typologization and this has allowed the foregrounding of the cultural role and the overall presence of Angelov as an individual. Here again, in the work on the early reception of Haralan Angelov's poetry and with the possibilities opened by the approaches adopted for the correction of long-standing assumptions, the doctoral candidate's comprehensive literary knowledge extending to the latest research in the field of literature, and her skills have been convincingly demonstrated.

The third chapter of the dissertation is focused on the civic ideas of Angelov as a man, actively engaged in the politics and the administrative apparatus of the modern Bulgarian state. At this point, four documents, not studied until now, as well as the discovered teacher's diary of Haralan Angelov, have made it possible for Greta Rassukanova's research to gain in depth. The chapter is composed of two substantial parts the first of which elaborates on the work of "the teacher, the enlightened educator and chitalishte activist," while the second is focused on the shift in the value system of Bulgarian society which was then undergoing a large-scale transformation. The significance of work on these documents resides not only in their discovery for Bulgarian literature and history but is made evident in the successfully completed attempt at an in-depth culturological study. In this way, the figure of Haralan Angelov as mayor, governor, member of parliament, teacher, composer, and educational and cultural activist has been further solidified, thus practically aiding the reception of his literary works.

All of this has been additionally enhanced by the analysis conducted in the fourth chapter of those of "Haralam Angelov's interests, hobbies and pastimes which were outside of the framework of his administrative duties and political commitments" (Dissertation abstract, p. 62). His concern for

and commitment to the preservation of nature reveal him as a man whose ideas were synchronized with the tendencies then developing across Europe for the designing of parks and the arranging of tourist trips. Some of his more serious hobbies were numismatics and archeology, not just because of their trendiness, as pointed out by the dissertation author, but as part of his interest in the unravelling of Bulgarian history and the specifics of Bulgarian culture. The second part of this chapter, titled “The Metamorphoses of the memory of yesterday and today”, frames the research and shows in detail the mechanisms of “national oblivion” and its institutionalization in the different historical periods. Once again at this point, the appropriateness of the selected methodological toolkit becomes evident, which is consistent both with the analysis of the preceding chapters as well as with archival artefacts included in Chapter 5 as mentioned earlier.

II. PROCEDURE EVALUATION

The procedure for the public defense of Greta Haralanova – Razuksanova’s doctoral dissertation “Haralan Angelov – Poetics and Civic Ideas” is in full conformity with the requirements stipulated in the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act and the Regulations and Rules for Academic Development of the New Bulgarian University. The whole sequence of steps in the training of the doctoral student at the respective NBU program has been completed with precision and academic rigor and all the documents – from the enrollment to the Rector’s order for the appointment of the members of the academic board of examiners – are in full compliance with all legal norms.

The Dissertation abstract presents the whole dissertation as well as the conclusions and the contributions of the research succinctly in an appropriately comprehensive manner. Results from the research have appeared in three publications, which is in full compliance with the minimum state requirements for obtaining higher education degrees and academic positions.

The dissertation is based on original research and all of the references are correct. The bibliography comprises 235 titles in the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets, arranged according to the *NBU Standards* of citation and source referencing.

III.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to say that the dissertation titled “Haralan Angelov – Poetics and Civic Ideas”, conducts the reader through the comprehensive presentation of the results of a research which is academically solid and which has been carried out with methodological consistency. With everything stated in mind, I would like to strongly recommend that the higher education and academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy be conferred on Greta Stefanova Haralanova – Razsukanova and I appeal to the other members of the Examination Board that they also give their support to the dissertation.

13.07.2021

Sofia

Reviewer:

Albena Vacheva