

STATEMENT

by

Prof. Amelia Licheva, Dr. Habil.,

University of Sofia, Theory of Literature Department,

on awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to **GRETA STEFANOVA**

HARALANOVA-RAZSUKANOVA

dissertation topic: **'HARALAN ANGELOV – POETICS AND CIVIC IDEAS'**

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Yordan Eftimov, PhD

Introducing the topic, significance of the research, and general remarks

This dissertation fits perfectly in the New Bulgarian University's more general outlook, as well as that of the Department of New Bulgarian Studies in particular, in that it aims to reconstruct one of the possible alternative 'small' stories in the context of grand literary history. It achieves this mainly by analysing concrete practices, rather than imposing theoretical frameworks on them. This is not to say that the work does not demonstrate sufficient familiarity with theoretical research or does not make use of it; rather, it is meant to stress that theory here has been delicately and unobtrusively woven into the analysis, observations and conclusions which, to repeat what has just been mentioned, rely mostly on interpreting facts, examples and literary output.

Thus, the dissertation focuses on the Bulgarian Revival Period, albeit not seen through the prism of the canon or through the prism of the traditional mythologems about patriots or revolutionaries; rather, it takes the perspective of the figure of the enlightener and educator; what is more, this is one of the lesser known and more marginalised educators and enlighteners who have faded from collective memory, namely Haralan Angelov. The author is thoroughly familiar with the little that has been written about Angelov; she competently argues against some of the points previously made by Stilyan Chilingirov and Boris Yotsov, and, more importantly, makes a good case for Angelov's achievements and his place in the revised version of Bulgarian literary history.

Apart from the well-argued inclusion of Haralan Angelov in the canon, to which I shall return below, some of the major contributions of this research include a debate about the uses to which the Revival Period is put, delving deeper into its lesser known legacy, representing the eternal conflict between tradition and modernity, as well as specifically looking into the multi-faceted

nature of Bulgaria's Revival Period and discovering personalities whose life and work has marked watershed moments, who have acted as predecessors and who, from the vantage point of the present, can be thought of as 'literary phenomena in the context of the Revival Period paratext'. In addition, the dissertation debunks the myth that all the school-teacher poetry created during the Revival Period belongs to 'low' literature and hence has no place in the canon. Greta Haralanova's analyses of Angelov's poetry not only show such a judgement to be prejudiced and false, but also demonstrate that this work contains in it the beginnings of modern poetry; if we seek a dialogue with the present, this poetry has a great deal to say, as it introspectively explores the depths of human personality, as well as big issues such as loneliness, the pointlessness of life, the vanity of the modern day, etc. In this sense, the author not only fleshes out the figure of a different writer within the Revival tradition, but is also able to bring to the fore the hidden faces of the Bulgarian canon. This is certainly no small achievement which will help contemporary readers see Bulgarian literature in a new light. Moreover, in analysing Haralan Angelov's poetry, the PhD candidate applies psychological theory and the methods of psychobiography; this approach confirms that whenever we read Bulgarian literature through a modern perspective, it inevitably comes to seem more up-to-date, as well as more surprising, itself.

One should also highlight the author's attempt to explain Angelov's more marginal place with the reception and attitudes of his time – the 'melancholy tone of these pieces' was not in line with the expectations of their contemporary audiences. The appeal to research into reception and contemporary attitudes forms part of the methodology of this dissertation more generally, allowing Haralanova to draw meaningful conclusions, including some concerning the current perception of Revival authors. This approach is one of the characteristic features of the dissertation, which is driven by a belief that modern readers can appreciate this forgotten author and reaffirm the possibility to reinstate him in the mainstream canon, or at least in the 'shadow canon' (to use a term coined by David Damrosch).

Finally, it is important to note Greta Haralanova's efforts to single out the European dimensions both in Angelov's literary output and in his activities. What I have in mind here is the detection of early modern features in Haralan Angelov's poetry, his interest in the magnetic otherness of European literature, or the European dimensions of his educational and social work, in general all that Haralanova might call 'integration into supra-Balkan "otherness"'.

Assessing the merits of the work

What has been pointed out so far naturally touches upon this dissertation's merits and contributions. The dissertation has succeeded in convincingly arguing why Haralan Angelov ought to be added to the Revival Period canon. It likewise succeeds in revealing a much more complex image of the Bulgarian Revival Period, emphasising its educational and pro-European aspects, showing them to be no less important than the avowedly patriotic and ideological.

The dissertation is based on a vast body of empirical studies, and work has been done with archives that have so far remained unexplored; this research skilfully brings together the theoretical and the historical, facts and analyses, supporting all of this with valuable personal assessments and conclusions. The PhD candidate has been able to accomplish something that truly deserves the label of 'reassessment'.

No less important are the innovative in-depth analyses of Haralan Angelov's literary output, transcending the boundaries of school-teacher poetry and placing him among the forerunners of Modernism. In the candidate's own words, this 'is on the cusp of unfinished tradition and the modernity that has not yet taken place'. There are also valuable intertextual analyses made by the author, drawing parallels to poems by Peyo Yavorov and Dimcho Debelyanov.

There is furthermore a very practical contribution – the unpublished texts, as well as the digitised appendix, both painting a fuller picture of what we are used to calling Revival Period legacy, and more specifically – the image of Revival Period intellectuals.

It can therefore be safely concluded that a great deal of excellent work has been done, which goes well beyond what is expected of a graduate student's PhD dissertation.

Summary and publications

The dissertation summary faithfully reflects the contents of the dissertation, clearly singling out and stating its contributions. The candidate has presented a sufficient number of papers based on the dissertation, published in reputable outlets.

Conclusion

In view of the merits of this dissertation highlighted above, as well as the skills it demonstrates in terms of conceptualisation and analysis, including serious research and a solid background, I shall confidently vote in favour of awarding Greta Stefanova Haralanova-Razsukanova the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 3 August 2021

Signature:

.....