

EXAMINER'S ASSESSMENT

by Dr. Yordan Simeonov Efftimov - Assoc. Prof. at New Bulgarian University, Sofia,
scientific field 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Studies (Theory and History of
Literature)

member of the Scientific jury for the competition for the academic position

PROFESSOR

in the professional field 2.1. Philology, Faculty of Basic Education, New Bulgarian
University, Department of New Bulgarian Studies, announced in Darzhaven vestnik, issue.
47/14. 06. 2019 with sole candidate Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, DSc.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University

From a formal point of view, the materials presented by the applicant exceed many times the work required to cover the minimum national requirements under such a procedure. They also cover the high demands of New Bulgarian University. Not only the impressive volume, but above all the research significance, as well as the innovative nature of Plamen Doynov's monographs, critical books, studies and articles suggest his occupation of the academic position of "Professor".

II. Research work and results

1. Evaluation of the monographic work

Plamen Doynov has been a leading figure in Bulgarian literary historiography since 2005, when he entered a major employment contract at New Bulgarian University. His research has taken a worthy place before, but it is at NBU that he gives full traction to his research projects.

His professional work is "Literature of the Cases. From Tobacco to Wolves. Case Studies in the Literary Field of the People's Republic of Bulgaria" (2017) is the first attempt in the Bulgarian literary studies to present literature from the period of the People's Republic of

Bulgaria through microhistorical methodology. This approach is still used by few in Bulgaria, and only in the works of Prof. Ivaylo Znepolski receives such widespread use, as in the mentioned book by Assoc. Prof. Plamen Doynov. Within his homeland – Italy and France – the microhistorical approach has long been attacked by other historians and rethought by the very leaders of the scientific paradigm such as Carlo Ginzburg, Jacques Revel and Giovanni Levi. But “Literature of the Cases”, although one of the first comprehensive Bulgarian studies in this paradigm, is sufficiently self-reflective and critical to the possibilities of microhistory. And since it is a literary-historical work, self-criticism also comes from the specifics of engaging not only in the texts of the clashes (such as the transcripts of meetings of artistic committees during the years of socialism, but also of reviews, and more, of organized critical campaigns reception), but also in the self-contradictory and self-contradictory artistic texts - in an era in which the artistic text is never autonomous and always supplied with political implications. To remind you that in its original version, microhistory is the work of historians (not literary historians), who, however, include fiction in their work, and also look at the archives themselves with treaties, notarial certificates and any legal documents as a kind of narrative and even lyric corpora. In our case, it starts from a completely different starting point. Plamen Doynov's work on reconstructing socio-historical contexts is not only impressive – it opens new fields of methodological dispute. The term ‘case’ itself is particularly interesting for analysis. It contains the kernel of the microhistorical approach. For it is not a matter of literary-archeological “findings”, it is not a matter of piquant literary-historical situations, but of events that at first glance appear monstrous and strange but represent mirrors in which the whole universe of the literary and cultural universe of socialism is viewed. Therefore, the proposed new periodization systematization is a real challenge for literary science. I know that for many, the great contribution of this researcher lies in the accumulated array of documents, in the deeply plowed archive of publishers, and in the careful attention to periodicals (as if not looked at thus far). But the true power of “Literature of the Cases” lies precisely in the changed idea of what the literary-historical field is. And how what was considered a special case is a significant literary-historical fact. Carlo Ginzburg himself in his famous manifesto defines the work of microhistorics as similar to that of a detective. But also of psychoanalyst. All three have to reveal the whole picture, and the whole always looks like an iceberg – 4/5 of it is the invisible part, the one left on the water. That is why curious “conspiracies”, even “ambushes”, behind-the-scenes games revealed through letters and transcripts, power moves, party interventions, but also with State Security mechanisms, are in fact only the surface of a system that has to be described by the

skeleton through the muscles to the expressions of its facial muscles. Plamen Doynov enters the different branches of history – he describes the political dependencies and outlines the picture of an ideology-structured system, but also does sociopsychological dissections, where purposefully produced clown rumors, attempts to manage the failure or success of a work, the state's effort to format the career of an author or group of authors is also dependent on the horizon of their imagination for success and realization. But in addition, ‘cases’ also involve working on the interpretation of specific works and tracking down the changing interpretive keys actually applied during the reception.

That is why the newly produced history of Bulgarian literature from the period 1945 – 1989 consists of a story about a series of dramatic circuits of events – the scandal with the novel “Tobacco” by Dimitar Dimov, the planned failure of “Poems” by Konstantin Pavlov, the battle over stopping the poem “To the South of Life” and the story “Bread of Crumbs” by Ivan Dinkov, the arresting cases of the book with epigrams and cartoons “Red Hot Chili Peppers” by Radoi Ralin and Boris Dimovski, as well as the novel “A Face” by Blaga Dimitrova, the difficult publication of the novel “Of wolf hunting” by Ivaylo Petrov. The ‘case’ looks like an incident, a unique event. But after a thorough analysis, it turns out to be the most natural phenomenon possible.

2. Evaluation of the contributions of the other attached publications

In addition to his main professorship work, the candidate has applied five other monographs on the central names and problems of new and contemporary literature. The definition of ‘monographs’ is not overstated, though books are sometimes built from the assembly of previously published studios. Within the books, these studios are rethought and assembled as in Tetrix.

Three of them are devoted to the synchronous, at first glance analysis of the landmark “Years of Literature”: “1910 and the years of literature” (2014), “Literature, thaw, rift: 1962” (2015) and “1956: The Hungarian Uprising and the Bulgarian literature” - in Hungarian (2017).

Together with Mikhail Nedelchev, Plamen Doynov is the main contributor to the term ‘years of literature’ as an important term in describing significant phenomena in literary history.

What are these years? Years of change and abrupt change? Years of abundance in some literary and historical era? Years in which politics has made a strong imprint on art? Or are the years in which literature, and more generally, art, prevailed and showed unequivocally on the big stage that the world is not controlled by ideological institutions? Of course, first of all the last.

The book “The Name of Poetry: Nikolay Kanchev” (2016) is an example of the specific way in which Plamen Doynov develops a personal reading of literature, focusing on the creativity of one of the most significant and, at the same time, contemporary Bulgarian poets. For Plamen Doynov, the uncompromising behavior, but also in the artistic language, in handwriting, makes Nikolay Kanchev a possible center of the alternative literary canon. Attached to all of these books is “Bulgarian Literature and the Beginning of the 21st Century (2004-2012)” (2013) – the most comprehensive, yet most colorful and multifaceted work. A work showing clearly the connection between literature and 1989 with the literature of the era afterwards.

3. Citation from other authors

Plamen Doynov is among the most cited contemporary Bulgarian literary critics. His studies cannot be surrounded by everyone who has scientific projects in the field of the history of Bulgarian literature during the period 1945 – 1989. offerings. Researchers who cited Plamen Doynov's writings include foreign scholars such as Maxim Kirchanov, Vasilis Maragos, Milan Pilyak, István Kovács, Zinaida Kartseva, and publications cited by such prestigious journals as the Moscow University Newspaper.

4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and application of the obtained results in practice

Plamen Doynov participates in various research and creative projects, connected in the most obvious way - for him literary production is a process whose researcher could not remain a cool-blooded observer. Even in his texts dealing with more distant eras, such as the time of modernism from the early twentieth century, he finds a way to relate processes to those of his own present. At the same time, his interests draw him to participate in projects with open historical intent. This seems contradictory, but it is logical for a scholar for whom a literary historian cannot be complete without the other half of the same personality - a literary critic. Therefore, it is natural that, outside of his own and his colleagues at New Bulgarian University, Plamen Doynov projects mainly in the projects of the Institute of Literature of BAS and the Veliko Turnovo University.

He has taken a serious part in 11 projects, of which the most significant, of course, is the one of the Scientific Program “Literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946-1990)”, organized by the NBU Department of New Bulgarian Studies and started in 2008. The project is a logical consequence of previous conference initiatives, but as a long-term program, it is

precisely the authorship of Plamen Doynov. He is the director of the program, but also the engine of several publishing series with many separate monographs in them – the series “The literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. History and Theory”, “Personalities”, “Years of Literature”, “Red to White. NRB Literary Archive” and “Alternative Canon. Works”.

Plamen Doynov is not only the head of the team of these series, but also the most frequent editor-in-chief of each volume. To this must be added the work of managing the publishing work itself, for which he has always preferred to be personally responsible.

It should be noted that both international seminars, at which Plamen Doynov is the leader – “The Two Faces of the Writer: Personal Cases in Eastern European Literatures” (2017-2018 academic year) and “USSR and NRB Literatures: Parallel Interpretations” (December 2013), which also rely on the comparative approach and lay the Bulgarian literature of the socialist decades with all its aesthetic conquests, ideological alibits, cultural-political dogmas, discussion areas, difficult-to-solve cases in a broader socio-cultural context. In these projects, Plamen Doynov succeeded in inviting Prof. Evgeny Dobrenko from the University of Sheffield, Prof. Galin Tikhanov from Queen Mary University in London, colleagues from Hungary, Ukraine and Poland. The projects were implemented in excellent communication with the Polish Institute, the Hungarian Cultural Institute and the relevant foreign universities. Plamen Doynov is also a participant in the international project “Literary Pax Sovietica: Late Stalinism and East European Literatures” organized by the University of Shefil, UK (May 2014) and in the international project “Chronology of Soviet Culture: Constants and Transformations” organized by Nezhin State University “N. Gogol”, Ukraine (July 2013). He is a member of the national project team for writing the textbook “NRB from start to finish”, organized by the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past – Sofia (2011) and co-author of the collective monograph “Bulgaria under Communism” (Routledge Histories of Central and Eastern Europe). London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

For two years, Plamen Doynov has also initiated a new ambitious project related to the writing of “History of NRB Literature (1944-1990)”. The project was presented and discussed at three consecutive meetings of the Theoretical Seminar of the Department of New Bulgarian Studies, to which external participants were invited, and the level of theoretical debates was worthy of publication among a wider audience.

III. Educational and teaching activities

1. Auditory and out-of-class employment, work with students and doctoral students

Plamen Doynov is the scientific leader of the successfully defended PhD student Maya Dimitrova Decheva (Maya Kissova) with a doctoral thesis on the stage performance of Bulgarian poetry 1990-2010.

He is a teacher who develops and enhances the university courses he leads in a timely manner. There are several practical ones, including introducing students to editorial work in cultural media and publishing.

Plamen Doynov is the co-founder and host of the NBU Reading Club, the NBU Creative Writing Club, contemporary forms of working with students who develop their extra-curricular engagement and their involvement in the academic community.

Plamen Doynov is among the most active in the Department of New Bulgarian Studies executives and reviewers of bachelor's and master's degrees.

2. Assessments from student surveys

The average grade of the students for the satisfaction with the courses and the teacher is very good 4.62. The assessment is indicative of both dedication, competence and fascination in teaching the subject, as well as the demanding nature of the lecturer.

IV. Administrative and social activity

1. Participation in the collective governing institutions of the NBU

Plamen Doynov has been a member of the Faculty Council of the Ministry of Finance, a member of the Academic Council of NBU, head of the Department of New Bulgarian Studies since May 2012.

2. Social activity

Plamen Doynov is one of the most prominent Bulgarian literary researchers. He is the Vice-President of the Bulgarian Writers Association (since 2003) and has initiated numerous forums in this role. Member of various juries in competitions for both professional writers and beginners, including students. Thus he is a member of the jury at the first edition of the national award for contemporary Bulgarian prose Helicon in 2002, the jury of the national Slaveikov Prize for lyric poem in 2012, the jury of the national poetry prize named after Ivan Nikolov for 2013. Only in recent years he is the chairman of the jury of the Chudomir Prize for humorous story (2018) and a jury member of the first edition of the European Literary Prize Dimitar Dimov (2019).

Plamen Doynov was deputy editor-in-chief and director of Literary Newspaper Ltd. (1996-1998) and director of the National Student House (1998-2004).

He is a member of the Askeer Academy (since 2005) and has been involved in the work of the most significant theater awards in Bulgaria for years. He is also a member of the jury of the Competition for a New Play in Bulgarian Language, established by New Bulgarian University.

3. Attracting students to the program

Plamen Doynov systematically invites students to participate in projects from the Scientific Program "Literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946-1990)", mainly by working with archival and bibliographical sources, as well as for participation in conferences.

V. Personal impressions of the applicant

I have known Plamen Doynov for almost three full decades. All this time, he was devoted to literature, literary criticism and literary history, which he developed systematically and simultaneously. It is one of the shining examples that one's own artistic creation cannot prevent the researcher seeking to achieve a richer historical picture in his scientific pursuits. Without neglecting the more distant history of Bulgarian literature since the beginning of the twentieth century, Plamen Doynov gradually focuses on his project of carefully crawling the literary field of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. At one point, this project became central to the entire New Bulgarian Department, and Plamen Doynov played the role of both the most conscientious researcher and, at the same time, the head of the general conferences and the compiler of the scientific collections. Along with his activities, the entire New Bulgarian Studies Department acquired a clearly recognizable face of an academic institution with the greatest weight in the studies of Bulgarian literature and culture from 1945 to 1989.

In doing so, several features of Plamen Doynov's project must be emphasized. The first is the pursuit of historical authenticity, pursued with conviction and rigor. In this respect, it is no coincidence that the notion of the "revolution of the archives" has emerged, which can well describe the extremely large-scale rethinking of the historical period with the help of new documents, solely sought and introduced by him. The second is the commitment to literary history as inevitably linked to the living literary process - the asserted awareness that the literary historian is also a critic, wanted or not. The third is the conviction that one of the greatest achievements of literature is to see it as an autonomous field of freedom. This conviction drives Plamen Doynov to appreciate the very texts that develop this autonomous

field. The fourth is the creation of an apparatus of new concepts to better describe the richer picture of the historical reality of the period. The fifth is the work on the so-called. an alternative canon, that is, the work of critically rethinking the legacy of the recent past and rearranging the literary canon in high school and on the media agenda. Last but not least is the sixth feature of this project, which is realized with the activity of Plamen Doynov as an editor in the Literary Gazette, but also as a scientific adviser and consultant on the thesis and doctoral thesis - the work on the creation of other scientists to engaged in studying the period.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the applicant's activities and achievements

Plamen Doynov is a scientist whose topics are highly recognizable and who systematically develops a difficult scientific program, with direct implications for present life. His scholarly writings create a new outline of the notion of a great historical period and finally enable him to argue scientifically. As a researcher he introduces vast arrays of new archival sources, but the real benefit is that they not only prove, but often turn over established literary reputations. In his teaching, he is true to his approach and directs students to topics that further develop the picture of a much more complex literary life than those presented by literary historians before him.

Conclusion: Plamen Doynov's large-scale scientific activity impresses even those who are not interested in his research; it is a model for scientific alertness and dedication to a scientific project with direct connection to the topics of the present. I could not doubt for a moment the value of this long-lasting and persistent effort. Therefore, I propose to the Scientific Jury to award Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, PhD, the academic position of PROFESSOR in professional direction 2.1. Philology, FBO, Department of New Bulgarian Studies and, accordingly, to be elected to this position by the Academic Council of NBU.

09.10.2019

Drafted by:

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