

REVIEW

by Prof. Antoniya Velkova-Gaydardzhieva, Phd, Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", area of higher education 2. Humanities, area of professional specialization

2.1. Philology (History of Bulgarian literature from Liberation Day to World War I and History of Bulgarian literary criticism),

member of the jury for granting the academic position

PROFESSOR

in the area of professional specialization 2.1. Philology, Department of New Bulgarian Studies, announced in SG, issue. 47/14. 06. 2019 with sole candidate Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, Ph.D.

I. Evaluation of the applicant's compliance with the minimum national requirements and the requirements of New Bulgarian University:

The materials submitted by the candidate exceed the necessary ones to fulfill the minimum national requirements. The candidate should have obtained an academic position "professor" much earlier. Proof of that is not only the impressive amount of research, but also the value of the research and the innovative nature of the monographs, critical books, studies and articles.

II. Research and results:

1. Evaluation of the monographic work.

Plamen Doynov is a well-established figure in Bulgarian literary science from the first decades of the 21st century. He has gained absolute authority in the Bulgarian literary set. He has his own voice in the modern theory of literature. The word conceptualism is fundamental thing to his creative and research world of Plamen Doynov.

His work named "Literature of cases. From *Tobacco* to *Wolf Hunt*. Case Studies in the Literary Field of the People's Republic of Bulgaria" (2017) is the first attempt to present literature from the period of the PRB through micro historical methodology in the Bulgarian literary studies. Moreover, I would like to emphasize that the author is one of the writers who builds the method in the process of research itself. His theoretical constructs are a result of a thorough research of literary texts, of the reconstruction of socio-historical contexts, and of the entire literary field with all its internal laws and external influences. That is the reason his expositions to be full of

inventive analytical observations, literary archaeological findings, periodization systematizations and typological classifications. There is something both modern and traditional about Doynov's achievements as a modern scholar. On the one hand, he pursues common processes and paradigms. Thanks to his hard daily work with archives, he has accumulated a "mountain" of "files and documents". On the other hand, he has glimpsed into private stories, intimate experiences, and the unique human worlds that have been touched by forcibly silenced manuscripts during the socialist decades.

In the very beginning of the study, the author will justify the categorical-conceptual volume of the literary-historical construct "case literature".

Cultural-political typologies, sociopsychological dissections, hermeneutic sections of Plamen Doynov are in the direction of the almost detective reconstruction of the entire literary field in the years between 1946 and 1990. With all the obvious plots and behind-the-scenes games, competitive struggles and power machinations, collisions between sovereignly creative and administratively dependent figures, covert interventions of the CC of BCP, attempts to manage the failure or success of the work, blocking or redirecting author's career, etc. I can that Pl. Doynov takes the role of a literary archaeologist and detective, without neglecting that of a moving writer.

Based on the sketches of Giovanni Levy and Jacques Rowell, outlining the possibilities of microhistory and case model as an approach in historiographic research, Pl. Doynov "transposes" the microhistorical approach as a meaning-making tool for studying the literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. In order to unravel a number of unsolved cases in Bulgarian literary history from her socialist past the author directs us to the following well-known literary work. The novel Tobacco by D. Dimov, the book "Verses" by Const. Pavlov, the book of poetry "To the South of Life" and the story "Bread of Crumbs" by Ivan Dinkov, the book with epigrams and cartoons "Hot Peppers" by R. Ralin and B. Dimovski, the novels "Face" of Bl. Dimitrova and "Wolf Hunt" by Iv. Petrov. His choice is driven by the perceived "helplessness" of a number of other theoretical and methodological approaches to art born in totalitarian times - from immanentist readings to deconstructive practices, from phenomenological receptions to politico-biographical interpretations.

Looking through his micro historical magnifying glass, at first glance at the specifically historical and local, in the incidental and accidental, the literary historian acquires a different perspective, with another "scale" of conceptualization of literary phenomena and processes, not functionalized so far in "large scale".

Several characteristics of "Case Literature" make it a research novel – its plot, chapters, intricate stories, social and political twists, intellectual-spiritual adventures and an open ending. In order to recreate the complex and traumatic times between 1946 and 1990, the author uses numerous documents scattered throughout the private and public storages. He has to do detective-like work -

discovering and tracing these texts. He successfully recreates the events of these times. The author stories are exciting and analytically told.

The "Case" edge raises the question of the fine line between exceptionally and ordinarily, between incident and model. The "Case" actually offers a different version of the history, multiplies the contexts, perspectives, diverse states of the history.

At the end of the first decades of the 21st century, there were attempts in Bulgarian theory of literature to rewrite the literary history. Plamen Doynov appeals for a meaningful questioning of macro-historical narratives, especially as regards those devoted to literature and art in the communist world. However, I would like to emphasize that, although he creates different, alternative stories for authors and works - Plamen Doynov discusses those names and titles that are "stages" and "peaks" in contemporary national literature. On the other hand, he stubbornly and steadfastly unmasks the false, politico-ideologically inculcated literary "generals" who forcefully seize the literary republic and crush its freedom. The seven stories in this book also tell a lot about these dramatic shifts in cultural and political „strata“, the gross institutional replacement of transient aesthetic values.

Thus, the author's research narratives do not at all oppose the lists of canonical artistic phenomena that have already emerged from the synchronously emerged authoritative (and not administratively empowered) criticism. In addition, the literary historian creates a new semantic image of the values canonized in cultural consciousness through the search and retelling of facts, and through their insightful interpretations,. I take "Case Literature" as a kind of correspondence through the various research optics of the conceptual study "Alternative Canon: Poets". The alternative canon, as formulated by Plamen Doynov, can only be understood by referring it to the socialist literary canon.

Relying on what has been accomplished by: the "clue's paradigm" of knowledge, reconstructed by Carlo Ginsburg, the historian of literature has made the literary-sociological, cultural-political, socio-historical, psychobiographical section of the literary field of the PRB literary section so far in depth.

Plamen Doynov recognizes and acknowledges not only the merits and potential of the methodological approach, but also its epistemological boundaries, i.e. what cannot be done through the case. If I have to summarize – it is a lesson in research ethics and it reflects credit on him.

It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that Bulgarian literary history registered its efforts in the so-called revolution of the archives and the opportunities offered by it free entry into prohibited stock repositories. Which the literary detective with his inherent flair for new - small and insignificant, invisible at first glance, odd documents - restores and constructs the cases in the NRB literature at a later date.

The research vocabulary is impressive. It seems to photograph the case in its essentiality, and it is the result of careful and time-consuming work. In the short volumes of the investigative word, the literary critic has formulated what will remain forever in the literary and historical memory of the corresponding "cases". The truly lapidary elements of the most iconic works of the socialist times and their dramatic fate call what the conflict between the author's moral grounds and the discourse of power lies.

The author is aware that his book is an open-ended research novel, a kind of *opera aperta*, and he even outlines directions for future research and problematic fields.

2. Evaluation of the contributions of the other included publications.

In addition to his main professor work, the candidate has applied five other monographs related to the problems of new and contemporary literature. At first glance, some of the books are collections, but in fact they are ideological-thematic, aesthetically-philosophical, and structurally and compositionally integral and unified.

The titles of three of them are indicative: "1910 and the Years of Literature" (2014), "Literature, Thawing, Fault: 1962" (2015), "1956: The Hungarian Uprising and Bulgarian Literature - in Hungarian" (2017). Pl. Doynov is the first in our contemporary literary set to impose the construct "the years of literature". He is an author with a pronounced taste for the "chronicle", "calendar", "times" of literature. All the concepts and categories through which the researcher simultaneously immerses himself in the seething of aesthetic-ideological passions, but also through which he distances himself from the transient and the pseudocultural. The researcher performs a serious archeological work focusing on important events, turning points, and boundary years in literary and historical development. On the basis of which he creates unknown stories, discussing unforeseen facts, and sporadically commented events.

The Name of Poetry: Nikolay Kanchev (2016) is the result of many years of literary-historical and analytical-interpretative efforts of Plamen Doynov on the legacy of one of the most significant Bulgarian poets. Problematizing the poet's contradictory perception of poems, as well as the ban on publishing in the socialist decades, the researcher focuses on the uniqueness of his poetics, on the character of his linguistic behavior and writing style.

"Language Unity" is a key formula, a research code for deciphering N.-Kanchev's poetic secrets and insights. The poet delves into layers of language, he analyses the world and existence. He lives in language as infinity and exists only through words. It is precisely the uncompromising nature of both the writing style and the public gestures of the poet that make Nikolay Kanchev a key figure in both

the alternative (from socialist realism until 1990) and the new literary canon (from the turn of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century). Almost aphoristically, the researcher defines Kanchev as "poet in poetry."

"Bulgarian Literature and the Beginning of the 21st Century (2004-2012)" (2013) - The reviewer and the historian are two existing, mutually seeking figures of Pl. Doynov. Even in the role of operative critic par excellence, he historicizes carefully, patiently the modern, because he knows very well that art history "manifests itself as a kind of accumulation" (P. Bourdieu). A historian of the distant and more recent past of national cultural heritage, Doynov knows both the stage and secondary names and titles of tradition, and so situates the newly emerging authors with such confidence in the dynamic sociocultural context of the present. So with this book, he has established himself as a "judge" of the current events.

Pl. Doynov is a master of conceptual periodization and cartography of the current cultural field, of rigorous and at the same time empathetic evaluations and interpretations.

The dozens of formulas he constructs in connection with his literary phenomena will remain milestones to national critical thinking. They "nail" the character of the commented literary worlds.

The reviewer has a sense of recognizing and capturing the phenomena. At the same time, eminent knowledge of world trends in literature gives him reason to put "our" experience next to the "foreign" one.

3. Citation from other authors.

I will say, without any exaggeration that Pl. Doynov is one of the most cited contemporary literary critics. I think the 145 citations do not show the reality at all.

4. Evaluation of the results of participation in research and creative projects and putting the results into practice.

It has already been said that Pl. Doynov is one of the brightest, most active figures in the contemporary literary area, but also in contemporary spiritual life in general. His social and cultural roles are not few. He participates and manages national and international projects, related to literary and humanitarian issues and to the development of Bulgarian Studies abroad.

He is related to eleven projects and I want to focus on the Research Program "Literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria" (1946-1990), organized by NBU's Department of New Bulgarian Studies and started in 2008. Pl. Doynov is not only the author of the project and program manager, but also the host of seven publishing series. The research perspectives on PRB's literature, delivered by scholars drawn from almost all Bulgarian universities, are fundamental to the modern, non-ideologically conceived conception of the artistic heritage of this period.

Also noteworthy to mention are the two international seminars. Pl. Doynov is the head of "The Two Faces of the Writer: Personal Cases in Eastern European Literature" and "The Literatures of the USSR and the People's Republic of Bulgaria: Parallel Interpretations". They rely on the comparative approach and lay the Bulgarian literature of the socialist decades with all its aesthetic conquests, ideological conquests, cultural-political dogmas, and discussions, difficult-to-solve cases in a broader socio-cultural and geopolitical context.

I am impressed by the ambitious project related to the writing of "History of the Literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1944-1990)", an extremely difficult literary and historical endeavor. However, given that Pl. Doynov is one of the greatest - both documentary-empirical, literary-historical, analytical-interpretive, and socio-cultural - expert in the literary field of this period. This project, with all its obvious plots and underwater currents, will be brilliantly realized.

III. Educational and teaching activity.

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

Pl. Doynov is the academic advisor of the successfully defended PhD student Maya Dimitrova Decheva (Maya Kissova) with a doctorate thesis on "Stage realizations of Bulgarian poetry. 1990-2010".

He is a professor who accurately and timely develops and refines the university courses he leads. I particularly admire one of them "The Profession of Reviewer". Bulgarian universities with a philological focus, with the exception of Veliko Tarnovo University, neglect the literary criticism as the aesthetic self-awareness of any national literature.

In addition, Assoc. Doynov is the co-founder and host of the NBU Reading Club, the NBU Creative Writing Club. These clubs are interesting way to work with students. The clubs cultivate aesthetic taste and teach how to create oral and written texts - activities that younger generations rarely practice. Pl. Doynov is among the few university professors from the area of Humanities providing internships to students. He is among the most active in the Department; he writes

many reviews of bachelor's and master's degree theses, and he is author of many scientific works.

2. Assessments from student surveys.

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

IV. Administrative and public work.

1. Participation in the governing bodies of the NBU.

Pl. Doynov is a member of the Faculty Council of the MF, a member of the Academic Council of NBU, and Head of the Department of New Bulgarian Studies since May 2012.

2. Social activity.

It is difficult for me to imagine a colleague who so devotedly, comprehensively and deeply engages in literary, historical and critical work, making it a daily matter of public interest. Pl. Doynov is one of the most valued members of the jury of national and international competitions. He is competent, a man of wide reading and critical reflex; he is preferred guest and compelling interlocutor in a number of television and radio programs.

3. Attracting students to the program.

The lecturer regularly ensures the participation of students in projects from the Research Program "Literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946-1990)" - mainly work with archives and bibliographic sources, as well as participation in conferences.

V. Personal impressions of the candidate.

For the past two decades, Plamen Doynov is among the unconditionally established authorities in the field of contemporary literary criticism and science. He is also among the undisputed builders of the contemporary Bulgarian literary canon. In his role as a reviewer and editor of Literary Newspaper Pl. Doynov has continued the tradition from the time of Dr. Krastev and his successors to uphold literary criticism as a literary institution. With his dozens of critical books and literary-historical monographs, compilations, remarkable academic series, expert evaluations, reviews, problematic reviews, Pl. Doynov has been working hard to maintain the autonomy of the literary field.

He is one of the first and few conceptually in depth researchers in the literary field of the PRB era, with all its complexity, contradiction, and controversial questions.

VI. Opinion, recommendations and notes on the candidate's work and achievements.

Plamen Doynov's research and teaching work have not only stood out with a bright personal character, but also have indisputably contributed to the Bulgarian theory of literature, humanities and academic life over the last three decades.

Conclusion: In conclusion, I strongly recommend to the jury to award Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, PhD, the academic position of PROFESSOR in a professional area 2.1. Philology, Department of New Bulgarian Studies and I support his application to be approved by the Academic Council of NBU.

06. 10. 2019

Prof. Antoniya Velkova-Gaydardzhieva, Phd