

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elka Traykova

in the competition for the scientific position "Associate Professor"

Area 2 Humanities;

Professional field 2.1 Philology.

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In the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.1 Philology, announced by the New Bulgarian University, Department of New Bulgarian Studies, the only candidate is Assistant Professor Dr. Biliana Radoslavova Kurtasheva.

According to the requirements of the Law on Scientific Degrees and Titles, the candidate has attached the necessary documents for the purposes of the competition. They meet and exceed the national requirements for holding this academic position. B. Kurtasheva participated in the competition with a habilitation thesis "On the edge of comparison. Yavorov and the Rolling Stones and Other Un / Possible Intertexts", 4 studies, one of which was published in a prestigious international publication and 8 articles. She is the author of a scientific book, co-author of "Textbook for specialized training in literature for grades 11-12" and "Teacher's Book" to the same textbook, editor of 4 scientific and fiction books. Since 2000 she has been the editor-in-chief of the magazine "Sledva" - a magazine for university culture of NBU, participates in research projects of NBU and other academic institutions. The attached publications are presented by Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. B. Kurtasheva as an already established literary scholar.

What unites the studies and articles in the book "On the edge of comparison. Yavorov and the Rolling Stones and Other Un / Possible Intertexts" is the birth of a new meaning, which sometimes moves on the border, where incompatible or at least hitherto incompatible texts meet and dialogue. B. Kurtasheva seeks these intertextual intersections not only between two works, but between many works and authors, creating a rich and complex palette of unexpressed messages and hidden influences that easily turn into non-literary and categorically destroy familiar literary clichés. Her texts play different plots - they are sharply encountered or somehow delicately superimposed on each other to tell many stories of Bulgarian and world culture, to describe in a new way popular characters or bring out of oblivion remaining completely invisible terrains and themes. And so she naturally and without pathos creates another, unexpected face of Bulgarian literature - creatively assimilating foreign influences, passing freely through cultural and historical spaces. Without stating it as a goal, much less recognizing it as a mission, B. Kurtasheva's book gives an intriguing but well-argued answer to one of the essential questions, repeatedly asked after Dr. K. Krastev: to what extent is Bulgarian literature European and world? Her intertextual dialogues (deeply or more superficially penetrating in meaning) do not give unambiguous answers, they rather open new horizons for other, different interpretations. Perhaps the most striking example of how the author moves on the verge of intertextual clashes is the text of the book "Yavorov and the Rolling Stones in the Hour of the Blue

Fog". The text fully sets out not the provocative, but even the shocking for the traditional literary-historical reading overlap of two works - created in different times, styles and genres, by personalities who certainly do not know each other. The poem and the song - incompatible, unsuspecting, but so close - an obvious fact for B. Kurtasheva, but unnoticed by another admirer of Yavorov, who is also a listener to the Stones song. But every reader of the text is surprised not only by the close words, but also by the meaning of the existential messages embedded in them - about the time and traces in it, about the wisdom of descending maturity in that metaphorical hour of "blue fog", which is actually a transition to old age and death. The precise intertextual reading goes through all the semantic layers of the meeting between "In the Hour of Blue Fog" and "As Tears Go By" and yet many questions remain that would raise new clues. This is the red thread that B. Kurtasheva runs throughout the book - forming oppositions between authors, works, aesthetics and genres - she actually doubts the established interpretations and provokes the possibility of new ones. Its, sometimes quite radical deconstructions, provoke approval or disagreement, but always achieve their goal - to free the imagination of the reader, to sharpen the attention of literary critics, to reveal the unexpected semantic potential of works.

The naming of the real topos in the unfinished poem "Hell" by Geo Milev is rather the involvement of the reader - a very important object and participant in the intertextual deconstruction, in an intriguing game. Naming and convincingly rejecting the names of the cities marked in the text in order to reach her discovery - the metropolis is London, B. Kurtasheva demonstrates a different optics of reading classical works and thus changes the overall cultural context in which they are laid. In the article "Dalchev: Politics of Maturity (in the Shadow of Geo Milev)" she gives an interesting key to interpreting the theme of old age in the poetry of Atanas Dalchev, linking this early traumatic feeling with the article "Poetry of the Young" (1924). The fierce denial of the accusations of imitation and epigony, although implicitly directed by G. Milev to Dalchev as one of the galaxy of young people, provoked the writing of the polemical article declaring N. Liliev's poetry dead.

Reading a plot of "The Sin of Ivan Belin" through the graphic opposition of white and black is an original approach, implemented in the article "Mimicry of white: for people and wolves in Yovkov." In it B. Kurtasheva draws a whole chain of unexpected meanings, which remained hidden or marginalized in other readings. The common symbolic space in which Belin and the white wolf are placed at the beginning of the story does not signify harmony, but prepares the well-argued clash of contrasts - visual, moral, ethical, which lead to the dominance of black in the finale. This interpretation of Yovkov's work shows that the author easily handles various literary paradigms, without prejudice, but also with the confidence of a scientist who knows well the mechanisms by which textual deconstruction takes place allows himself to break well-established assessments that dominate the literary space. In her book "Anthologies and Canon: Anthological Models of Bulgarian Literature" (2012) she traces the long path of the Bulgarian anthological tradition and its fundamental role in the formation of the strictly guarded and difficult to pass field of the classical canon. In the study "The Poverty of Death in Early Post-September 9 Poetry: On the First Poetic Anthologies in Bulgaria after 1944" B. Kurtasheva shows how and why the political system and ideological dogmas with the help of anthological selection confirm the "death of the author's handwriting" (p. 95). they unify the literature, imposing mediocrity as value criteria and cultivating the myth of the "left canon", which turns out to be simple, boring and rigid by dogmas.

In the diverse book, *On the Edge of Comparison. Yavorov and the Rolling Stones and Other Un / Possible Intertexts* B. Kurtasheva manages to create her own recognizable style in which she skillfully maintains the balance between the intertextual approach and specific historicity, full of facts, archival documents, statistics, considered in well-defined social and political contexts. In this sense the study

"Totalitarianism and Quasi-Translatability: The Bulgarian Case in the 1970s / 80s. Institutions, mechanisms, consequences" is closer to a positivist approach to the events and functions of translation in the years of totalitarianism. The text provides important information about the power strategies of control over literature through translation turned into "an expensive showcase, turned inwards instead of outwards" (p. 100). This is a very valuable study of the typology of translation practices then, of the mechanisms that create the socialist canon - to what extent and whether it is at all convertible outside national literature.

Intertextuality - explicitly stated in the title and convincingly argued in the book's preface is the foundation on which the much-needed theoretical network for every researcher is built - it connects conceptually the 17 studies and articles in B. Kurtasheva's book. But they are also in a tangible but very correct dialogue with intertextuality as a meeting of works in the course of the Bulgarian literary-historical process. The article "The Trials of Non-Identity: The Centaur Novel" Me, Anna Comnina "rather tests the possibilities of this approach to mark the path of Vera Mutafchieva from the re-creation of different historical times as fiction to the transition to the existential reality of memories. A well-thought-out and well-argued thesis, which stands out in the multi-voiced critical reception of her work.

A distinctive sign in perhaps the most intellectually penetrating interpretation of Konstantin Pavlov's poem "Alchemists" ("Alchemists. Nietzsche, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Other Intertextual Shadows in Konstantin Pavlov") is this removal of the work from the area of the native, but not by ironic repulsion, and by expanding its semantic volume by condensing the shadows of characters from other cultural realities, by swaying obvious allusions, and by discovering others unnoticed so far. This text, as well as "The Green Idea of Silent Poetry: Ivan Tsanev" or "Ekaterina Yosifova and the Sublime: Ironies, Gaps", uphold the gracious meeting between literary studies and poetry; between the poet and the researcher. These are "mind-blowing" (I gladly use the expression of Prof. Alexander Balabanov) and provocative meetings that increase and deepen the contributions of the book. And one more thing - B. Kurtasheva writes fascinatingly and easily manages to involve the reader in the most unexpected intertextual entanglements. Her texts are most often subordinated to a complex compositional structure. It unfolds smoothly into attractively titled pieces that arrange the individual pieces of the puzzle to put together the whole picture. And in it there are many colorful pieces of cultural history not only of the distant but also of the recent past. It has been reconstructed through various discourses in the studio "Aunts: scenes from family romance in the Bulgarian poetry of the 90s". The frivolous intimacy of the title is misleading, because the text shows how marginal images from modern literature are loaded with many meanings and become bridges between cultures, authors and generations. From aunts to grandparents, the family turns out to be the transmission of meanings in Bulgarian poetry of the late twentieth century, which overcomes both political upheavals and personal rifts to create and preserve spiritual energies that will charge meaning and the new century.

The intertextual analyzes carried out in "Women's Literary History and Its Impossibility" through "the birth of the literary mother in the spirit of intertext"; in the intertextual encounters of "three favorite fairy tales" that rehabilitate the image of the evil stepmother or in diagnosing the death of magical realism through the global success of Roberto Bolaño and in other stories she tells, they are sharply confronted and deeply deconstructed.

All outlined contributions in the book "On the edge of comparison. Yavorov and the Rolling Stones and other un / possible intertexts, as well as in other literary studies of Biliana Kurtasheva, give me reason to strongly suggest that she be awarded the academic position of "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.1 – philology.