

## ASSESSMENT

By Prof. Dfn. Prof. Albena Vladimirova Hranova, Department of Philosophy, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

- On the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor of New Bulgarian University - Sofia, in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology;

- In the competition for Associate Professor, announced in the State Gazette No. 109/21.12.2021 with the only candidate being Assistant Prof. Bilyana Radoslavova Kourtasheva, PhD, Department of New Bulgarian Studies, New Bulgarian University - Sofia

**1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant.** The procedure complies with all legal requirements and the provisions of the Regulations of New Bulgarian University, the deadlines, the layout and the content of the documentation. The only candidate in the competition is head asst. Dr. Biljana Radoslavova Kurtasheva. She was born in 1973, graduated in Bulgarian Philology from Sofia University. She graduated in Bulgarian Studies from Sofia University in 1996 with a Master's degree. After a successful competition she was appointed assistant professor at the New Bulgarian Studies Department of the NBU-Sofia in 1999. Since 2006 she has been a free PhD student at the department, and in 2011 she defended her dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Science and Education, published as a monograph - *Anthologies and Canon: anthological models of Bulgarian literature*. The scientific works submitted for the present procedure after the defence of the dissertation - published habilitation thesis, articles, participation in conferences and number of citations fully comply with the national academic requirements for the academic position of Associate Professor.

### **2. General description of the applicant's activities**

**A) Teaching.** Throughout the period of her teaching activity - 1999-2022 - Dr. Kurtasheva has prepared and delivered multiple lecture courses and seminars: 3 basic general education courses, 16 courses in total in undergraduate programs, 5 courses in graduate programs in a wide disciplinary range: language and genre issues, essay writing and translation issues, Balkan literatures, Slavic literatures, Bulgarian literary history, gender and gender studies, etc. In this academic year - 2021-22 - she is teaching 5 lecture courses (some of them two-semester courses), including 1 basic education, 2 undergraduate and 2 graduate courses. These data indicate that the candidate's teaching activities are fully consistent with the academic position of Associate Professor. As a contribution to her educational commitments should be taken into account the development of courses on Moodle, her co-authorship of a textbook on literature for 12th grade (2020), etc.

**B) Research.** In the competition for associate professor Dr. Biljana Kurtasheva has submitted 12 articles published in the period 2014-2021 in Bulgarian, English and French. Their thematic scope is wide - literary canons and canon formation, modern readings of classical archetypal schemes, contributory analytical texts on Bulgarian (Pencho Slaveykov, Yavorov, Georgi Markov, Ivan Bogdanov, Bogomil Raynov, Nikola Georgiev) and foreign (V. G. Zebald, Roberto Bolaño) authors. Since 2011 she has participated in 26 national and international academic conferences and seminars; her works have been cited 36 times. Biljana Kourtasheva also developed individual research projects at the Center for Academic Research - Sofia (2013) and IWM - Vienna (2016-2017); she is closely involved in the project activity of the NBU and the New Bulgarian Studies Department; she is also one of the organizers of the university seminar *The Essay - The Genre that Thinks Crises* (2020-2021). ); not to be overlooked is her work as an editor of fiction and scholarly books and as the long-standing editor-in-chief of the NBU's university journal, *It Follows*.

Dr. Biljana Kurtasheva's main work proposed for the habilitation procedure is her research *On the Edge of Comparison: Yavorov and the Rolling Stones and Other Not/Possible Intertexts* (2018). On the one hand, the book is conceptually monographic in that it has a single guiding platform, that of intertextual observation, the theoretical punctuation of which is set out in the preface and focused on in the chapter 'Nikola Georgiev and Intertextuality' itself, along with a number of references in the other chapters. On the other hand, the study seems to be a mosaic movement of heterogeneous themes, objects, aspects - despite the apparent literary-historical chronology of the arrangement (Yavorov, Geo Milev, Dalchev, Yovkov, post-September 9<sup>th</sup> poetry, the translation policies of socialism in the 1970s and 1980s, and the translation policies of the 1980s), Vera Mutafchieva, Konstantin Pavlov, Ekaterina Yosifova, Ivan Tsanev, the typology of aunts, and the kinship figuratives in the lyrics of the 1990s), it is the intertextual connections that unravel and block the literary-historical chronology, and parry time as its main basis. Let us add to this the non-autonomy of the "Bulgarian" and the very peculiar status of the classical opposition "own-foreign" in the study - on the one hand it is radicalized by the constant stipulations around its plotting, and on the other - obliterated by the constant openness of the intertextual linking and its conceptual capacity. This is why the book really balances "on the edge" of the epistemological capacities of the intertextual reading.

At first glance, the title of the book evokes a question - why "on the edge of comparison", why comparison and not, for example, confrontation or juxtaposition? Comparison seems to go against the central aperture of analytical reading - intertextuality - for at least two reasons: 1. Comparison goes back to the old comparativism, denied and overridden precisely by intertextual readings; 2. If we hear in the title the innovative tropological meaning of "comparison," we would have to assume

that comparison is poetically asymmetrical and irreversible in principle, as it is with metaphor - and this contradicts that value "in-betweenness" that at least the Bulgarian translation of the term manages to suggest and cure small literature of its obsessive sense of peripherality ("*Let's say it again: intertextuality can give an in-betweenness even to the periphery (which we are)*" - p. 168). A closer reading of the study in its entirety, however, refutes these doubts because: 1. The book does not replace intertextuality with comparativism, because it has deprived comparativism of its positivist core - the contactualist finding, or at least of that synchrony which traditional comparativism interprets as an argument in itself, attributing it to the corresponding Romantic "zeitgeist". 2. The caveats on the application of the intertextual reading have a different intensity and a different argumentation in *On the Edge of Comparison* - from „*What could Yavorov and the Rolling Stones have in common? What this has to do with that, as they say*" (p. 5) through "[*the allusion*] *tempts, not least by its impossibility of categorization. At once a detailed description of an analogous situation and yet also a complete contextual abstraction and irreducibility*" (p. 125), to the question of "*why Bolaño belongs to us*" (p. 221). Thus, from the casual primary denial of possible intertext - through its tempting inexplicability, to its affirmation - the study indeed maintains "comparison" as asymmetrical, as always possibly possible but never reversible in its meaning; it is as if in each section the author is wrestling again and again for the merits of intertext. The reflections are therefore also protected from the multiplicity of analogical thinking and from the dangerous ability to "connect everything with everything" that Umberto Eco had seen as the main gateway to overinterpretation. On the contrary, the book continuously and delicately suggests both its temptations and its doubts, balancing its searches, achieving its argument and its heuristic productivity. Alongside the undoubted research contributions of *On the Edge of Comparison*, we should also note the author's exquisite insight into the details and seemingly extraneous givens of the text, through which the intertextual web nonetheless becomes dense and grounded, and her precise academic stylistics and inventive literary plotting.

In conclusion, I confidently pronounce before the distinguished scientific jury my high evaluation of the teaching and scientific work of the candidate and I declare my positive vote for the award of the academic position of Associate Professor to Assoc. Dr. Biljana Radoslavova Kurtasheva.

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Sofia

Prof. Albena Hranova, DSc.