

## OPINION

By Prof. Amelia Licheva, Doctor of Philology, Sofia University, professional field 2.1 Philology (Literary Theory), on the application of Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, Doctor of Philology, in the competition for the academic position of Professor in professional field 2.1 Philology

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

The application of Assoc. Prof. Plamen Ivanov Doynov, Doctor of Philology, is in complete compliance with the minimum national requirements as well as with those of NBU. It is worth noting here that Plamen Doynov is one of the most active and recognised Bulgarian literary historians and the texts he is applying with, as well as their reception, do not merely meet the requirements for applicants in such competitions but comfortably exceed them.

### **II. Research (creative work) and results**

The monograph Assoc. Prof. Doynov is applying with is entitled *Case Literature. From Tobacco to Wolf Hunt*. This text summarises Plamen Doynov's years of effort towards rewriting the Bulgarian canon, reconstructing contexts and literary plots and, last but not least, establishing an alternative literary history that rethinks all ideologemes and is founded on literary values. Saying that Plamen Doynov has done something in the field of literary history that entire departments failed to do all by himself will not be an overstatement. With his extraordinary efficiency and enviable ability to intertwine facts and fiction, literature and history, to reconstruct contexts and to build upon documents, Doynov has indeed succeeded in rewriting the post-1944 Bulgarian canon. What is more, he did so without going down the easy path of analysing the forbidden and the forgotten and instead gave us a whole new idea of authors who had somewhat been marginalised and silenced by censure or have always stood out as figures of authority despite the ideological sanctions they suffered, as was the case with Dimitar Dimov. Finally, above all, he discovered the powerful wave of resistance in the works of many authors of the so called Socialist realism period, which transformed the face of Bulgarian literature. Plamen Doynov's research has indeed shown the nuances and the compromises made by the authors of this period but it has also revealed their great victories, thus contributing to the comprehensive rethinking of literary history and to everyone seeing the fair value of Bulgarian literature.

Speaking of Doynov's constructing this new type of literary history, we cannot but mention one more detail. Plamen Doynov is one of the researchers who established those alternative canons I mentioned – in his case, with a focus on literary cases, as in the monograph, or on literary years, as in other works by the author. Thus, Doynov opened new avenues for Bulgarian literary theory



to explore, topical both in a European and in an international context. Therefore, we can say that with research as the one mentioned, Doynov has done something which we usually attribute to New Historicists in contemporary literary theory –he proved that, if we seek an adequate reading of literary history, its texts need to be contextualised, and its contexts – textualised. This can be seen in his signature style of analysis, which is not just a type of close reading or a particular analysis of a given work, but a careful '*archaeologisation of situations and contexts through documental proof and memoir versions*', as well as reconstruction of all kinds of stories – not only literary but life stories as well. Building upon the tradition of Michel Foucault and of many of his immediate contemporaries of the stature of Carlo Ginzburg, he managed to draw the most valuable from literary, historiographic and macrohistoric achievements, in order to establish the writing of a type of literary history with a plot where predicaments, scandal, facts and information from archives and records play a significant role in bringing to light both the text and the author figure and presence. After all, when literary case history is created, the fictional is heightened to open new perspectives on publicity, reception and even into the creative process itself.

If we had to describe Plamen Doynov's monograph with a handful of words, they would be interdisciplinary, well-founded on theoretical knowledge, but also transforming archives into unmistakable pieces of proof, modern, contributory, conceptual, polishing the image of Bulgarian literature from the so-called Socialist realism period. Last but not least, the monograph stands as a reminder that Bulgarian literature does not lack in writers who defended not only the dignity but also the talent they bore, thus earning their place in the canon.

The bottom line is that Plamen Doynov is one of the few names in contemporary Bulgarian literary theory who use their signature voice to dwell on subjects they have identified themselves and who have a personal niche and stylistics of their own so we owe him not merely the alternative history of post-1944 Bulgarian literature but its public life and broad reception as well. This is well supported by the frequent citing of the author's ideas and texts, as well as by the numerous reviews of his works. We should once again call attention to the fact that his texts are something which is never left unnoticed and upon which every future historian should build. It is this impossibility to ignore Doynov's works that shows how great of a recognition they deserve.

I have so far highlighted Plamen Doynov's contribution to literary history. To repeat, however, we should not neglect the fact that he is of the few Bulgarian literary scholars who venture into the field of the contemporary – and he does so not only through operational criticism, but through comprehensive literary research as well. It is no coincidence that one of the prominent texts in Assoc. Prof. Doynov's application is *Bulgarian Literature and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. 2004 – 2012*, which continues the baseline study of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century poetry and demonstrates that the theoretician's job is to pinpoint and outline tendencies, to predict and to construct the public life of contemporary writing.

I already touched upon the great visibility of Plamen Doynov's texts, further affirmed by the tremendous number of reviews and citations they have. It is very rare for a Bulgarian literary scholar to be so actively cited and this speaks not only of the applicability and influence of his



texts but also of the great authority he has gained as an author. His participation in international projects and the fact that foreign researchers in the field of totalitarian literature cite his work are further proof of all of this, as well as of the level of his recognition.

### **III. Educational and teaching activity**

Plamen Doynov is one of the faces of the New Bulgarian Studies Department and has greatly contributed to the NBU's indisputable place in the rereading of literature of the People's Republic of Bulgaria period. If I were to adduce particular examples of his participation in university life, I would mention that Doynov has initiated some of the key bachelor's and master's degree programmes and that he teaches both general and specialised courses (as well as e-courses). He has supervised eight bachelor's and master's theses and one PhD student, who has successfully received the respective academic title. Through his extracurricular occupations (he is an editor in *Literary Newspaper* and also works with various prominent publishing houses!), he has secured internships for many students, some of whom have already made names for themselves in literary circles. His work with students further benefits from his various initiatives such as the Book and the Creative Writing clubs, as well as his projects under *The Literature of People's Republic of Bulgaria (1946 – 1990)* research programme, which gives students the opportunity to work with archive and bibliographic sources and participate in various conferences.

Students evaluate the quality of the applicant's courses with a grade of 4.62, the minimum pass grade being 4.

### **IV. Administrative and social activity**

Plamen Doynov has been the head of the New Bulgarian Studies Department since May 2012 and is also a member of NBU's Academic Council. In addition, he is one of the prominent names in the field of the humanities, as well as chair or member of numerous committees for the most renowned national awards in the sphere cited. He is himself the winner of prestigious poetry and literary criticism awards.

Plamen Doynov strongly expresses his clear civic ideals and supports important causes, one of which is to open and read the records of artists.

### **V. Personal impressions of the applicant (if applicable)**

I have had the pleasure of working with Plamen Doynov in *Literary Newspaper (Literaturen Vestnik)* since 1994 or 1995. Besides our work on the newspaper together, we have often been members of various committees together. Plamen Doynov has always proven his team spirit, honesty, professionalism and commitment to various causes. Furthermore, he is a man of ideas, who is helpful, supportive and open to everyone talented.



#### **VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the applicant's work and achievements**

Being familiar with Plamen Doynov's unconventional ideas, the serious and comprehensive way in which he advocates and upholds them, his extraordinary erudition and efficiency, the authority of his writings and his entire body of work as a university lecturer and a renowned humanitarian, I am certain that he deserves to receive the academic title of Professor at NBU in professional field 2.1 Philology and I support his application before NBU's respected Academic Council.

Date 09/09/2019

Signature

