OPINION

By

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fotini Christakoudi-Konstantinidou, Department of General, Indo-European and Balkan Linguistics, Faculty of Slavic Philology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" on the competition for "professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, specialty "Balkan Literatures and Cultures" for the needs of the section "Culture of the Balkans", IBCT-BAS, announced in the State Gazette, issue No. 63/ 01.08.2025.

Assoc. Prof. Antoaneta Borislavova Balcheva completed her higher education at the Faculty of Slavic Philology of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", majoring in "Czech Philology" with a second major in "Slovak Language", and also studied at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University, majoring in "History and Theory of Culture". In 1997, she obtained the educational and scientific degree "doctor" with a dissertation on the topic "Character of Romanticism in the Slavic South". Since 1999, she has held the position of chief assistant professor at the Institute of Balkan Studies, and since 2011, after her habilitation, she has been appointed associate professor at the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center for Thracology.

The candidate's entire scientific output includes three independent monographs, participation in the publication and editing of scientific collections, a total of sixty-eight articles and studies and more than twenty-five reviews. She is the head of international and intra-institutional projects, as well as a participant in one Croatian and several national projects under the Ministry of Education and Science. Assoc. Prof. Antoaneta Balcheva is a lecturer at the State Educational Service "Balkan Literatures and Cultures", leads a lecture course at the Central Academic Center of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and is engaged in scientific management and consulting activities, has participated in over 36 scientific juries and examination committees of the Institute of Bulgarian Literature and Culture, the Faculty of Slavic Philology of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", the Institute of Literature and other related organizations. For the purposes of the competition, the candidate presents one monograph and 22 scientific papers, some of which (3) have been published in publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, the remaining articles, and studies (19) have been

included in scientific journals and collective volumes with scientific review, as well as the compilation and editing of six collections and one collective monograph.

The monographic work "Culture of Travel. Intertwined Texts and Fates of Bulgarians and Croats from the End of the 19th to the Mid-20th Century" (Sofia: Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center for Thracology, 2025, ISBN 978-619-7179-64-4) is undoubtedly a contribution, as it contains valuable information on the topic, which the author unites in a large-scale cultural-historical and comparative-literary follow-up in a volume of 274 pages. The monograph contains an introduction, four chapters with subchapters, a conclusion, and a solid bibliography of about 25 pages.

The motif of travel, associated with the "myth of return, transformation, search, discovery, maturation", and also adopting "the form of interpretation of the symbolic or allegorical structure of the world, of the lives of saints, pilgrimages, the process of knowledge and social analysis" (pp. 15-16), is the basis of a multi-component interpretation of the concept of travel, which in the course of the development of the humanities has received its precise definition through the prism of geography and tourism (Karl Sauer, Edmund Gilbert, David Nash, Tim Cresswell, etc.); psychology (John Key; Elton Glazer, Patrizio Colini, etc.); anthropology and cultural studies (Claude Lévi-Strauss; Percy Adams, Mary Louise Pratt, Peter Adey, Eric Lead, Herman Bausinger, Victor Turner, James Clifford, etc.); sociology (Zygmunt Bauman; Pierre Bourdieu, John Urie, etc.); literature (Michel Butor, Yuri Lotman, Mikhail Bakhtin, Attilio Brilli, James Buzzard, Mary Campbell, etc.); philosophy (Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau, Tsvetan Todorov, etc.), history (Jacques Le Goff, Eric Hobsbawm, Georges Duby, Lionel Casson, Alain Corbin, etc.), etc. (p. 9). Already in the introduction, it is clear that the author relies on a very broad literary-critical, philosophical-culturological and generally humanitarian-oriented treatment of a topic that has been present in the human cognitive field since the era of Antiquity, in order to move through and reach through "issues affecting identities, imagology, colonial and postcolonial ideas, the phenomena of modernity and postmodernity and their connection with various cultural and written practices" (p. 8). Its interweaving with questions concerning the normative classification of the text and the emergence of genre definitions such as literature of travel /literature of writing is a microtheme that also finds its expert interpretation from the opening pages, forming the foundation of the study.

The work is clearly structured in chapters and subchapters dedicated to various personalities and problems from the cultural life of Bulgaria and Croatia from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. The diachronic approach makes it particularly

useful in searching for the historical perspective of the processes, and, on the other hand, the thematic approach gives us the opportunity to consult individual subchapters for information concerning creative personalities such as Nikola Andrić, Marijan Alković and Franjo Horvat Kish, Antun Matoš, Pencho Slaveykov, Stilijan Chilingirov, Vesna Parun, and others.

Particularly valuable in my opinion in a Balkan context is the third chapter, entitled "THE EMOTIONAL MAPPING OF "OUR OWN" AND "THE FOREIGN" and the subchapters "Venice - real and imaginary in the creative world of Croatian romantics" and "The encounter of Bulgarian writers with the Black Sea coast in the first half of the 20th century". The imagological basis of the analyses allows them to be used for comparisons with other Balkan literatures, which makes the work a contribution in a Balkan comparative literary plan.

In conclusion, it is clear from the scientometric table provided by the candidate that she fully meets the minimum national requirements for holding the academic position of "professor". The articles, studies, citations, as well as all documentation are correctly presented and do not repeat the materials submitted in competitions and defenses that have already taken place. All of them are in accordance with the requirements of the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADSRB), the Regulations for its implementation in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Appendix to the Regulations of the National Assembly of the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center for Thracology (BAS) regarding the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for holding academic positions.

I strongly support her candidacy and propose to the esteemed scientific jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Scientific Council of the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center for Thracology "Prof. Alexander Fol" - BAS for the election of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Antoaneta Borislavova Balcheva to the academic position of "professor" in the section "Culture of the Balkans" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology, specialty "Balkan Literatures and Cultures".

09.11.2025 Member of the scientific jury:

/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fotini Christakoudi-Konstantinidou/