

OPINION

by Prof. Dr. Sc. Maria Grozeva-Minkova, New Bulgarian University

Regarding: Competition for Awarding the Academic Position of „Associate Professor” in the Professional Field 2.1. Philology, Special Field Spanish, SG issue 93/26.11.2019

1. Information about the competition

According to article 29b of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria candidates fulfilling the requirements of article 24, par. 1 and 2 of the Act, including fulfillment of the minimal national requirements as provided by article 2b, par. 2 are admitted to participate in the evaluation stage of the procedure for holding academic positions. The competition for the academic position of *Associate Professor* in the professional field 2.1. was carried out in accordance with the legal requirements and the Regulations and Standards concerning the procedures for awarding academic degrees and academic positions at the New Bulgarian University. The competition was announced by the New Bulgarian University for the needs of the Department for Foreign Languages and Cultures in SG, issue 93/62 of 26th November 2019.

The only candidate in this competition is Assist. Prof. Veneta Atanasova Sirakova, PhD. The verification of the submitted application materials proves that the candidate fully meets the legal requirements for the occupation of the academic position.

The candidate Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD, has submitted for participation in the procedure a total of 17 scientific papers, including 1 monography, 1 book, published on the basis of a dissertation, and 15 scientific articles. The check for fulfilling the minimum national requirements for the academic position “Associate Professor” shows that the participant in this completion meets all criteria and indicator points for this position in complying with the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

It should also be noted that works of Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD have been cited by 8 researchers in the field in Bulgaria.

2. Brief professional data of the candidate

Veneta Sirakova graduated with a Master’s Degree in Spanish Studies from the Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” and specialized in Spanish-American Literature at the Mexican National Autonomous University and at the University of Havana. She worked as a reporter, translator and text editor at the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, a part-time Spanish lecturer at the Institute for Foreign Students and NBU. Since 2001 till present she has been a lecturer at the New Bulgarian University. In 2013 she defended her PhD thesis on the topic of “(In)visibility of the Translator by Translating the Poetry of Gabriela Mistral (The Maternity Topic)”. Her research topics are in translation theory and practice, Spanish-American Literature and Foreign language teaching. She is a translator of films and books on history and philosophy.

V. Sirakova is a member of the Union of Translators in Bulgaria.

3. Review of the candidate’s teaching and pedagogical activities

Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova's teaching career spans over 27 years. She teaches courses in Spanish language, Translation, Translation of Specialized Texts, Film and Art Translation, theoretical courses in *Models and Technics in Translation*, *Translation Theory*, *History of Spanish American Literature* in NBU's BA programs and in the MA program "Translation and Interpreting", which is part of the European network of master programs. The candidate participated the development and improvement of all BA programs in Spanish at NBU. Her engagement with the educational process is attested by the organization and management of the TRAD NBU Translation school and the 2 Spanish textbooks.

4. Evaluation of the candidate's research and applied activities

Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD, participates in this competition with a considerable number of papers published after her PhD thesis defence.

I would like to discuss in some details her monograph "**Poetry and Translation. Pablo Neruda's Love Lyrics**", ISBN 978-619-223-054-5, NBU Publishing House, Sofia, 2019. The text body is a total of 187 pages and contains 1 appendix with translations of Pablo Neruda's poems. It comprises 4 chapters, an introduction, a conclusion and bibliography with 110 references in Bulgarian, Russian and English.

In this review, I will focus on some of the research topics investigated in the candidate's work that I consider **valuable contributions** to the field and worthy of the attention of the translators and the translation research community.

1) This is the first comparative study of Pablo Neruda's poetry in Bulgarian made by different translators at different times.

2) Some aspects of the poetry translation are analyzed that traditionally have not been in focus when translating from Spanish into Bulgarian. As a result, the loss of a large part of the poetic information carried by assonance, alliteration and sound anaphors has been clearly identified.

3) The analysis provides insight into translators decisions by rendering the sound characteristics, metrics and rhymes which define the lyric character.

4) The comparison establishes some regularities in the re-expression of the poetic text from Spanish to Bulgarian, caused by the limitations of both the linguistic systems and the specific nature of the two literary traditions.

5) The translation of taboo vocabulary and realities in the lyrics are the basis for conclusion about the main tendencies for their transfer from Spanish into Bulgarian.

The other publications submitted by Assist. Prof. V. Sirakova, PhD, for participation in the competition can be divided into several **areas**. The first group studies general issues of poetry translation. It could be clearly claimed, that this type of translation appeared on the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. I will mention here the articles discussing the methods of translating taboo vocabulary and the possible losses for the Bulgarian recipient; the recommendations for translating realities, illustrated with examples of Lorca's and Neruda's poetry translations in Russian and Bulgarian. Based on the comparison between the translations of the poem "The Swan" by D. Agustini in Russian and English, V. Sirakova critically discusses the different translation techniques of poetic imagery in order to preserve possible interpretations

and receptions in the host culture. Equally difficult and interesting in translation practice is the translation of metaphors, especially poetic metaphors. The candidate examines them on the basis of the poetry for children of G. Mistral translated into Russian and Bulgarian, outlines five possible approaches and determines the dominant ones in the two languages. The rendition of metaphors, especially poetic metaphors is also difficult and interesting in translation practice. The candidate examines this process on the basis of the poetry for children of G. Mistral translated into Russian and Bulgarian, outlining five possible approaches and determines the dominant ones in the two languages.

The next group of publications addresses the motherhood in the poetry of G. Mistral and R. Castellanos. Analyzing the poems V. Sirakova reveals the difficulties in seeking a woman's place in society, the contradiction between motherhood and the rejection of it in the name of poetic creativity. G. Mistral's poetry holds a special place in the research of Veneta Sirakova. The candidate is not the only one dedicating studies to the poetry of G. Mistral. I will point out here the subtle sense and mastery with which she translated 124 poems of the Chilean poetess, some of which have not been published in our country so far.

The third group of articles debates the translation **of individual poems** by P. Neruda from different creative periods. The strategies of translation into Bulgarian are analyzed, paying attention to the difficulties in passing the metric and the sound organization of the poems and the inevitable losses in this process.

The next topic area is devoted to the possibilities of using **poetry in foreign language and translation training**. The analysis of Textbooks for Spanish as a foreign language at different levels shows the tendency for poetry with all its different possible uses to come back to the classroom. Considering the possibilities of using poetic texts in translators training at university education, the author briefly presents the RASTE¹ model, outlines the problematic circles and substantiates the advantages.

I consider the most **important scientific contributions** in the works of Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD as follows:

(1) In G. Mistral's analysis of poetry, the traditional and trivial view of her poetry was overcome and its closeness to today's understanding of the difference and otherness of the modern world and the place of the woman creator in it as artists was shown.

(2) 124 poems of the Chilean poetess G. Mistral have been translated and published, some of them for the first time in Bulgarian.

3) On the basis of the poems by three poetesses from Latin America, the possibilities for reproducing author's neologisms and metaphors in poems for children and about motherhood were discussed.

Conclusion

The papers and materials submitted by Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD, fully meet the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the

¹ RASTE: Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación

Application of the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Regulations of the New Bulgarian University.

The candidate has submitted a sufficient number of scientific papers published after having awarded a PhD Degree. The candidate's scientific and teaching qualifications are outstanding. Her achievements in teaching and research meet the standards of academic excellence.

The summary of the highlighted contribution points in the works submitted by the candidate in this competition shows that Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakova, PhD, is a scholar with indisputable contribution to the field of translation theory and practice of poetry. Her insightful research, the depth and precision of her analysis give me reasons to recommend to the Honourable Members of the Scientific Jury to give Assist. Prof. Veneta Sirakov's application a **positive assessment** for the procedure of awarding the academic position of „**Associate Professor**” in the Professional Field 2.1. Philology - Spanish Language.

Sofia

10.12.2019

Signature:

Prof. Dr. Sc. Maria Grozeva-Minkova