

## OPINION

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With An Ethnographic Museum - BAS

on the scholarly and academic activity of Chief Assistant Gergana Georgieva Doncheva in relation to the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in the academic field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies announced in State Gazette Issue 34 / 23.04.2021 for the needs of the section "Culture of the Balkans".

### **1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CANDIDATE'S PUBLICATIONS**

Dr. Gergana Georgieva Doncheva is the only applicant in the competition for the position of Associate Professor participated. The candidate has submitted all the necessary documents correctly and accurately, no administrative omissions have been made. The submitted materials give complete and detailed information about the scholarly activity Chief Assistant Dr. Gergana Doncheva. In compliance with the requirements, she has enclosed two lists of publications - one containing all publications and one including the publications with which she participated in this competition. For the participation in the competition, two monographs have been submitted, i.e. "The Image of the Balkans in Balkan and Western Films: Presentation Strategies", Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2010, and "Thessaloniki Film Festival: History, Challenges and Metamorphoses", Sofia: IBSCT, 2021. The first monograph is based on the dissertation of Gergana Doncheva, and was nominated in 2010 for Best Research in the category of film theory and criticism. The list of publications with which the candidate participated in the competition, comprising 11 articles in scholarly collections in 2014 – 2021, can be amended by the publications after taking the academic position of Chief Assistant Professor in 2011, as well as the three co-editions (2015, 2018 (Bulgarian and English edition, and 2021) included in the extended list of publications.

Dr. Gergana Doncheva's publications demonstrate a high level of both scholarly and public engagement - the author has published her interviews with leading personalities in the field of cinema art, articles, reviews and reviews of books, film festivals, individual films in various specialized magazines and electronic publications - an activity that she has not included in the list of publications for the competition.

Even judging by the concise list, in quantitative terms the applicant's publications fully meet the minimum national requirements set out in the Academic Staff Development Act and related regulations. The submitted scientific production meets the profile of the competition - it is significant in terms of volume, content, and research topics addressed.

### **2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CANDIDATE'S RESEARCH ACTIVITY**

Gergana Doncheva has two master's degrees from St. Kliment Ohridski University - in Cultural Studies (2002) and in Political Science (2007). She defended her dissertation on "The Image of the Balkans in the Balkan Post-Totalitarian Cinema and in Some Western Works in the Period 1990-2006" in 2010 at the Institute of Balkan Studies - BAS, and since 2011, she has been working at the Institute of Balkan Studies - BAS. The two master's degrees, the high level of the dissertation thesis, as well as the specializations through scholarships (two three-month and two one-week), participation in scientific projects (3), in the organization of international or national conferences

(2), lecture courses reflect high personal motivation, sustainable lasting interest in scholarly activity and are evidence of accumulated experience and knowledge, developed competencies.

Gergana Doncheva's biography also impresses with her participation in the organization of national and international film festivals and juries, generally related to cinema art.

Dr. Gergana Doncheva's scientific career shows a skilful combination of research and expert work.

### **3. RESEARCH AREAS AND PROBLEMS**

Dr. Gergana Doncheva works on a variety of topics related to the art of cinema, which she examines in the time span of mainly the 20th - 21st centuries in a broad comparative perspective, i.e. Balkan, European, and international. The author applies the methods of historical reconstruction and discursive analysis, methodically examining in depth, with a critical scientific distance, both (cinematic) images and texts from archival sources and interviews she has conducted with leading filmmakers.

### **4. MAIN SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

Dr. Gergana Doncheva's original scientific contributions lie in the selection of significant, relatively underdeveloped themes, key to the understanding of Bulgarian, Balkan, and international cinema. Her contribution is the competent, grounded and consistent combination of approaches from film criticism, cultural studies, political science and oral history. With an excellent knowledge of the theoretical literature, combined with a thorough collection and analysis of diverse sources, the researcher traces, among others, the patterns of representation of the period of state socialism in film productions from Bulgaria and other (post-)socialist countries; presents the development of "small" cinemas in Europe; raises questions about the conceptualization and representation of national identity in the film industries of the Republic of North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Croatia; explores the specific iconic repertoire of (self-)exoticization associated with the Balkans; traces the historical transformations of certain cinematic images, such as the conceptual evolution of the vampire and the witch in cinema; and provides in-depth portraits of individual prominent filmmakers.

The habilitation thesis submitted for this competition, the monograph "Thessaloniki Film Festival: History, Challenges and Metamorphoses", is a concentrated expression of accumulated research skills. The multifaceted knowledge, the aspiration to cover each phenomenon studied in its entirety are embedded in the structuring of the work. The author proceeds from the understanding that a full understanding of specific (cinematic) processes and facts is impossible without their broad contextualization. Gergana Doncheva interprets the Thessaloniki Film Festival against the background of the main features of the film festival phenomenon as typology, participants, and functions outlined by her in the first chapter The Film Festival as an Object of Study. The author synthesizes the interrelationship between cinema art, politics, finance, cultural canons and outlines the hierarchical global festival network in diachronic terms.

The historical development of the Thessaloniki Film Festival presented in Chapter Two is also factually dense. Dr. Doncheva presents the emergence, the specific stages of transformation and the current status of this particular film forum as part of the history of Greek cinema, highlighting the influence of political, social and cultural processes in Greece on cinematography, and conversely the impact of the film festival on social development.

In the Third and final Chapter, *Bulgarian Participation at the Thessaloniki Film Festival (1963-*

2020), Gergana Doncheva examines, through the time marker of the watershed year 1989, the opposing models of the presentation of Bulgarian cinema abroad. According to the author, "the concept of the nature and functions of cinema in Bulgaria underwent significant changes and it turned from an instrument of ideological influence into a cultural product". This hypothesis raises questions insofar as the art of cinema has been closely intertwined with politics and economics since its inception; it is part of complex power relations. As well as to define "ideology" and "cultural product", their distinction is conditional; the intertwining prevails. Each power uses images (still - photography, and moving - film art) as "emotional tools" to push policies and ideologies. The hypothesis largely contradicts Gergana Doncheva's exposition, which, at all levels and for different film festivals, brings out the underlying connections film art - culture - economics - politics. The purpose of the research is to raise questions and stimulate new searches, the presence of controversial hypotheses in Gergana Doncheva's large-scale study I appreciate as beneficial. Although the text has an encyclopaedic character in places, it is written at a high academic level and reads as an intriguing read.

The presented monographic work is an original, in-depth, critical, argued historical-political-cinematic study of the Thessaloniki Film Festival.

#### **5. PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE CANDIDATE**

I have had the pleasure to participate in a number of academic forums together with Dr. Gergana Doncheva. For me, Dr. Doncheva is a promising scientist, standing out for her high professional responsibility and self-discipline, initiative and ability to work in a team.

#### **6. REASONED AND CLEARLY WORDED CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the above opinion related to the high scholarly and applied achievements and research experience of Chief Assistant Dr. Gergana Georgieva Doncheva, I confidently give a positive evaluation and recommend the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury and the Scientific Council of the Institute of Balkan Studies with the Center of Thracology - BAS to vote in favour of the election of Dr. Gergana Georgieva Doncheva to the academic position of Associate Professor in the field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies.

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