

NINETY YEARS ON THE MOVE: ENGLISH- LANGUAGE LITERATURES AT SOFIA UNIVERSITY

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The teaching and study of English-language literatures at Sofia University started in the early years of the twentieth century and their beginnings are connected with the name of Professor **Constantine Stephanov** (1879–1940), first appointed as lector in English in 1906 to eventually become the founder of English Philology as a degree subject in 1928, an event whose ninetieth anniversary we celebrate this year.

Stephanov studied at the American College in his native town of Samokov and then at the Wilbraham & Monson Academy in Massachusetts, USA. He got his BA and MA degrees at Yale and read philosophy for a year at the University of Berlin. Soon after his appointment at Sofia University he became Privatdozent (part-time Associate Professor) teaching English language and literature. In 1928 Stephanov was made regular Dozent in charge of the newly established university subject, and was promoted to full professorship in 1935, only to retire (apparently for health reasons) two years later. Among the various courses he introduced was the history of English literature. A true polymath, motivated in his work by a sense of mission – the affirmation of his country's place in the family of the civilized Western nations with a particular focus on its relations with the Anglo-Saxon world – Stephanov became the author of the earliest Anglo-Bulgarian comparative and receptionist studies in different areas including what nowadays would be called linguistics, literature and cultural studies. Along these lines he studied and popularized the works of major English and American writers. The Yearbook of Sofia University published his monograph on Byron and two substantial studies of Alfred Tennyson and Thomas Hardy. A number of his articles in various periodicals deal with Keats, Browning, Poe and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. An interesting essay draws parallels between the poetic works of Byron and the major

Bulgarian revolutionary poet Hristo Botev. Stephanov also reviewed for the press current translations of English literature, including Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, Georgi Mihailov's rendition of Poe's poems and Georgi Minev's anthology *English Poets*. His translation of Shakespeare's comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1925) is the first Bulgarian rendition of this play.

As soon as English became a degree subject, another lecturer was appointed in 1929 to assist Prof. Stephanov. This was **Roussi Roussev** (1900-1988), who would teach the practical language to generations of undergraduates during the next four decades. In the early years of his academic career in Sofia he also taught English and American literatures. Roussev had studied Classical Languages and English at Victoria University in Manchester, UK, and had then specialized at Columbia University in the USA. As a scholar, he was wholly devoted to literary studies. Some of his incisive commentaries on *Beowulf*, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Pepys, Pope, Defoe, Fielding, Goldsmith, Dickens, Coleridge, Whitman, Poe and others are among the first professional academic reflections on these writers in Bulgaria. Roussev was also very sensitive to new significant developments on the world literary scene. He ventured to recommend the then recent achievements of as yet controversial writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley and T.S. Eliot. Like Constantine Stephanov, Roussev engaged in comparative typological and contactological studies of English and Bulgarian authors. A considerable part of his critical energy was channelled into the interpretation of the work of important Bulgarian writers from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Many of his essays deal with questions of language and style. Roussev's contribution to the translation of the masterpieces of English literature into Bulgarian is impressive. He produced very precise if somewhat heavy-handed renditions of Shakespeare's four great tragedies. His are also the Bulgarian versions of some of the major works of English philosophers such as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. The students interested in the English language called him appreciatively "the living dictionary", but few of them realized that he was much more than that. Roussev lived in the public libraries. When he died, I was invited by his widow to inspect his private library and decide whether the University

would like to inherit it. His books had been all reduced through endless study to such a state that they would not be fit for further use.

The attainment of a truly international standard in the exploration and teaching of English literature at Sofia University, however, is incontestably associated with the name of Professor **Marco Mincoff** (1909-1987). His development as an all-round philologist can be traced back to the year of studies in classical languages he spent here before going on to Berlin, where, as a Humboldt scholar of English and on the strength of a dissertation in historical grammar, he obtained a doctoral degree in 1933. In 1939 Mincoff was appointed Associate Professor of English in the composite Department of Germanic Studies at Sofia University. A few years later, in 1946, as a full Professor, he became the founder of the Department of English Philology (to be renamed half a century later Department of English and American Studies) and remained uninterruptedly its Head until his retirement in 1974. For the better part of three full decades Prof. Mincoff taught all the core language and literature courses and raised them to a level comparable to that of any respectable European university. For all of them he produced the necessary coursebooks, which have not lost their usefulness to this day. His main efforts however were soon directed to the study of English Renaissance drama and, more precisely, of Shakespeare's part in it.

Mincoff's solid philological background led him naturally to a minute exploration of the linguistic texture of the plays. Thus, the bulk of his research was to be devoted to stylistic studies illuminating the vexed problems of authorship, collaboration and chronology. Some of the findings in them have acquired an important place in Shakespearean scholarship world-wide. The articles of this group include 'The Chronology of Shakespeare's Early Works', 'The Dating of *The Taming of the Shrew*', '*Henry VIII* and Fletcher' and, especially, 'The Authorship of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*'. Another, adjacent research area is the examination of the plays vis-à-vis their sources, revealing the dramatist's characteristic predilections and methods of work. Among these publications are: 'The Source of *Titus Andronicus*', and, in particular, 'What Shakespeare Did to *Rosalinde*'. The slant of these studies is as much stylistic as it is structural and compositional. The latter two are the central preoccupations of yet another group, comprising the early 'Plot Construction in Shakespeare'

and 'The Structural Pattern of Shakespeare's Tragedies', as well as the later 'Shakespeare's Comedies and the Five-Act Structure'.

In spite of his preference for a close textual analysis, Mincoff was not averse to the search for some useful generalization about Shakespeare's dramatic vision and overall aesthetic principles, as long as it was well-grounded in provable facts. 'The Problems of the Tragic in the Work of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries' and 'Shakespeare and Hamartia' are good examples of this thematic circle, but its more important component is perhaps formed by a series of studies starting with the early yet fundamental 'Baroque Literature in England', going through an article called 'Shakespeare, Fletcher and Baroque Tragedy' and permeating most of the critic's larger works, including his highly original *History of English Literature*. These are writings testifying to this scholar's unflagging interest in the interpretation of Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' dramatic endeavours as part of the significant transition in sensibility and artistic expression that took place in England during the Bard's creative years and divided his career into recognizable periods. Shortly before he retired, Prof. Mincoff wrote his first large-scale critical book *Shakespeare. The First Steps*, sketching out the evolution of the dramatist's craftsmanship and his poetic maturing from the late 1580s until the mid-1590s. A second book of similar range, *Things Supernatural and Causeless. Shakespearean Romance* came out when its author was already on his deathbed. This is a thoughtful study of the poet's last dramatic ventures examined against the background of their sources and in the context of contemporary trends in the Jacobean theatre.

Marco Mincoff became well-known and respected among Shakespeareans abroad on the strength of his many scholarly articles and competent reviews published in the most prestigious international literary journals. It is to be regretted that his books did not reach the same specialized and appreciative audience when they first came into print. For, although written in English, they were published in isolated Bulgaria and had no easy access to the network of international distribution. *Things Supernatural and Causeless* was actually fortunate enough, thanks to Boika Sokolova's intercession, to have its second edition published in the USA in 1992 and thus became Mincoff's only full-scale Shakespearean opus to be catalogued and stocked by academic libraries abroad.

From Shakespeare's contemporaries, Prof. Mincoff singled out for separate or comparative studies Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, Beaumont and Fletcher. He also published articles focusing on other periods, notably an interesting essay on John Keats's poetry. Last but not least, he is the author of a book called *The Study of Style*, drawing on his wide observations of representative texts from different ages and schools in the history of English literature.

At home Prof. Mincoff's renown as a first-rate scholar and critic during his lifetime did not spread much further than the walls of the University where he taught. When, in the early 1970s, a Bulgarian theorist of drama visiting Moscow called on the well-known Soviet Shakespearean Alexandr Anikst, he was puzzled to hear from his host that the foremost authority on Shakespeare in Eastern Europe at the time was not, as he expected, the famous Pole Jan Kott but a Bulgarian of whom he had never heard, Marco Mincoff.

It is not true, of course, that Professor Mincoff was completely unknown to the reading public in the country. As early as 1946 he had published an introduction to Shakespeare viewed within the context of the time. The book, *Shakespeare, His Age and His Work* was written in Bulgarian and almost half a century later it was sufficiently well-remembered to be reproduced in new editions. A number of Shakespearean articles and reviews in the national press as well as introductions, afterwords and commentaries in books of the poet's works in Bulgarian translation, drew the attention of the local lovers of literature from time to time, though obviously not often enough. What deserves a special mention is Prof. Mincoff's editorship of Valeri Petrov's translation of Shakespeare's complete plays. It is widely acknowledged that the high quality of this rendition is due to the close cooperation between a gifted poet and a competent editor.

By nature or by nurture, Marco Mincoff, like most true scholars, was a recluse, content with the company of his books rather than striving to reach a broader audience. And then, he chanced to live at a time when things English were not politically desirable in his country. If you were eager to speak of Western artists, Shakespeare included, in front of a larger public, you had to treat them in a manner prescribed by official ideology. Prof. Mincoff was not ready to compromise. He was too much

in earnest about his work to leave the quiet of his study and join the noisy chorus of the marketplace. His Shakespeare was largely unaffected by current political expediency, though he was never petrified into a classical idol but remained an object of dispassionate if appreciative investigation.

This heroic dimension in the life of a retiring scholar can, of course, become noticeable only in an oppressive political environment and is bound to remain somewhat incomprehensible to his brethren in gentler climes. But we who had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with Prof. Mincoff, or rather tiptoeing in awe by his sanctum sanctorum of an office, and making our first steps in the academic world under his guidance, have a clearer picture in our minds. It was impossible for us in the ensuing decades not to try and follow in his footsteps to the limits of our lesser abilities. It was impossible not to be conscious of the debt we owed to the creator of the Sofia English Department to preserve and develop it along the lines drawn by him. On a more personal note, let me say that I have always considered myself immensely fortunate to have had a teacher and a supervisor of my doctoral studies of the caliber and the personality of Prof. Marco Mincoff. And I am happy that I have managed to repay a small measure of his enormous gift to me by putting together on the occasion of his birth centenary in 2009 as a living monument to him a great volume containing all his important journal publications that I have managed to collect from the four corners of the round world. The admiration with which this volume was received by all international academic libraries and distinguished scholars east and west was truly rewarding.

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If I were to draw my survey to a close at this point, the development I have tried to trace would have been impressive enough. But this is, of course, just the beginning.

With the upgrading of the English Philology programme at Sofia University to a Department, Prof. Mincoff as its Head started actively recruiting new teaching staff. Naturally, he was compelled to accept “suggestions”. The first to be appointed was Dr. **Victor Sharenkov** (1892–1963), who had studied Slavic languages and literatures at Sofia University and had graduated in comparative Indo-European philology

at Columbia University. Subsequently he had lived for more than a quarter of a century in the USA, teaching for five years Bulgarian language, literature and culture again at Columbia University and for the next twenty-odd years working as librarian and consultant at the City Library of New York. During this period Sharenkov was the editor of the Bulgarian-language newspaper *Narodna volya*, published in Detroit, and became president of the American-Bulgarian Society and the Bulgarian Cultural Club in New York. He also taught Marxist aesthetics at the academy of the American Communist Party. Returning to Bulgaria after the end of the War, in 1949 Dr. Sharenkov was made Associate Professor at the Sofia English Department, where he offered the first course in the history of American literature. Ironically, for a while he was also asked to teach the course in English literature, which was taken away from the ideologically untrustworthy Prof. Mincoff.

Victor Sharenkov is author and co-author of University textbooks in both American and English literature. He has also published many newspaper and magazine articles on American writers such as Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, John Read, Jack London, Longfellow, black American poets, as well as on some English writers like John Milton, Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, all recommended as “progressive”. I remember Dr. Sharenkov from my undergraduate days as a kindly and unassuming though very tired old man, who would on occasion doze off in class but who nonetheless encouraged us to develop our own ideas about the literatures we were studying and to write critical essays that he always had the time to discuss appreciatively with each of us.

In the early years of the next decade the Department was joined by several able young people, just graduated from it, among whom was a prospective pivotal figure in the teaching of English literature, **Vladimir Filipov** (1925–2004). Filipov became Assistant Professor in 1952 to advance to the rank of Associate Professor in the 1970s and full Professor a couple of decades later. This rather slow academic promotion was due to the conditions under which both Filipov and his generation of university teachers as a whole were compelled to work. They often had to spend more than twenty hours a week in the seminar rooms teaching a wide variety of subjects, each of which required a good deal of preparation. At first Filipov had to teach all the components

of the practical course in the English language as well as conducting seminar discussions in English and American literature. In spite of his heavy teaching load, over the years he wrote and published a number of essays devoted to representative writers in these two literatures. A particularly valuable part of Filipov's contribution to the field of literary studies is a series of pioneering publications dealing with the history of the Bulgarian reception of English and American literature from the dawn of national sovereignty in the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. The aim of these studies was to create a reliable chronology and an evaluative hierarchy of achievements. Their findings have been proved extremely useful for the work of later researchers.

Prof. Filipov has done a lot to popularize the masterpieces of English and American literature both through his articles in the press and through his prolific and expert work as translator of prose and poetry and as editor of verse anthologies. He has perhaps done even more as a translator of Bulgarian poetry into English. In order to be able to do this highly specialized kind of creative work, one has to have a feel for and a command of the foreign language similar to the mastery of one's native tongue. Filipov was graced with this rare gift and it stood him in good stead as teacher, translator and scholar. In his first capacity, he insisted on keeping the Department's high standard, created by Prof. Mincoff, of proficiency in English both among the faculty and the students; in his second and third, his intimate knowledge of English made it possible for him both to probe into the minute stylistic details and nuances of texts under study and to reproduce them faithfully. His absence will inevitably continue to be felt.

Another American expatriate like Victor Sharenkov, though not of Bulgarian extraction but connected to Bulgaria by marriage, **Pauline Pirinska** (1914–1994), came into the Department in 1953 and can be credited with the role of 'founding mother' of its American Studies section. I was still at school when the family arrived from the USA and I remember that she was invited to talk to us about something, most probably the evils of capitalism, of which she had first-hand experience. Her little boy, two or three years old, who gamboled around her and made the visit look much more intimate, was destined for an impressive political career, though at that time this was not apparent.

Pauline Pirinska smuggled the informality of her manners into the Bulgarian auditorium, where, to the surprise of students used to rigid post-Stalinist discipline, she would on occasion lecture with a long American cigarette smoking between the fingers of her gesticulating hand. Pirinska, who taught the history of American literature with a lively sense of descriptive detail in spite of the mandatory ideological orientation, became Associate Professor in 1973 with a monograph titled *A Survey of the American Theatre from Colonial Times to 1945. Willa Cather*. Her interest in women-writers and their heroines could be seen as a prelude to later feminist research in the Department, especially in its Americanist section.

Grigor Pavlov (1930–?) entered the Department in 1960, after working nearly ten years as translator for the National Radio and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1973. Grigor Pavlov assisted Pauline Pirinska in the development of an American Studies programme, though he also taught English literature. His habilitation thesis was “Structure and Meaning in Eugene O’Neill’s *Mourning Becomes Electra*”. Pavlov’s publications are invariably ideological, harping again and again on the theme of alienation. It is a pity that he took this approach so earnestly, for it prevented him from doing justice to the rich artistic texture of the discussed work. Being a dramatist in his own right as well as a translator of American drama, interested in things that made a literary work tick, Pavlov was not unaware of or irresponsible to such matters. One feels that he stifled this sensitivity in himself. When in 1975 the City Committee of the Communist Party decided that a number of the Sofia University English Department faculty were of bourgeois descent and had to be kicked out, Pavlov allowed himself to be appointed Head of the Department and, alienated from his colleagues, was transferred to the Department of Foreign Languages.

Both Grigor Pavlov and Vladimir Filipov had mastered the English language to absolute perfection, the one in its American and the other in its British variant, and their services as interpreters were frequently sought on such special occasions as political talks at the highest government level.

The research topics of two other members of the Department, Dr. **Lyubka Sarieva** (1919–1985) and **Todor Kirov** (1931–1992), both recruited

in the early 1960s as English-language teachers, could be seen as spin-offs from Prof. Mincoff's magisterial work. Kirov explored Shakespeare's early dramas and engaged in criticism of Bulgarian translations of Shakespeare's plays. His most important study, 'The First Step of a Giant' was published in the Weimar *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*. A playwright himself, Kirov also wrote essays on the dramaturgy of Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill, while Dr. Sarieva examined the dramatic technique of John Lyly's comedies and the poetic imagery of the Romantics. An extensive Shakespearean study of hers has remained unpublished.

Yet another two faculty members appointed for the practical language course in the following years – **Blagoy Trenev** (1931–?) and **Nataliya Klisurska** (1937–2010) soon developed serious interest in American literature. In the early 1970s Trenev published a couple of essays on the role of the senses in Hemingway's prose, but then he failed to return from a specialization in the USA and was lost to the Sofia Department. Klisurska stayed put and became a teacher of American literature, having defended in 1983 her doctoral dissertation, "Dramatic Conflict in Lorraine Hansbury's Plays." She was promoted to Associate Professorship in 1988. In collaboration with Boukitsa Grinberg, she compiled two anthologies of American literature, of dramas and of short stories.

As an enthusiastic teacher with a genuine feeling for literature and good command of English, Dr. Klisurska did not a little to attract bright students as future researchers and teachers in American studies. But it was not all peaceful research and teaching in those days. In the wake of the 1975 purge, Klisurska was one of the few colleagues who approved of the Party decision and the only one who, at a meeting of the University Communist organization, declared that the removal of inappropriate faculty should go on, denouncing more teachers who in her opinion ought to be expelled.

Boukitsa Grinberg (1949–2002) graduated from the University of Maryland in the USA. In the early 1970s she joined the Department as a language instructor but it soon became apparent that she had serious interests in American literature and excellent scholarly abilities. Grinberg published essays on contemporary Afro-American fiction and on the early reception of American literature in Bulgaria as well as on the contributions of American missionaries to the Bulgarian National

Revival. Her doctoral dissertation, defended in 1988, tackled the problem of *Stereotypes in American Black Literature*. The untimely loss of such a capable and cultured colleague was distressful to the Department and in particular to its growing American Studies section.

It was in the early seventies again that **Alexander Shurbanov** and Georgi Papanchev joined the Department. After graduating in English Philology from Sofia University, in 1967 Shurbanov (1941) became the first postgraduate student of literature at the English Department. His doctoral dissertation, *John Donne's Reform of Elizabethan Poetic Imagery* was defended in 1972 and, having until then taught seminar classes in Renaissance literature on a part-time basis, he was now appointed as a regular Assistant Professor in the discipline. Meanwhile he had specialized for a year at Sussex University in the UK and taught Bulgarian language and literature at London University. In 1978 he was promoted to Associate Professor on the basis of his book *Renaissance Humanism and Shakespeare's Lyrical Poetry*; in 1991 a second dissertation, *Between Pathos and Irony: Christopher Marlowe and the Genesis of Renaissance Drama*, earned him the higher doctorate, and in 1995 he became Professor of English literature. For over four decades Shurbanov taught a number of courses in English Renaissance literature, literary stylistics and literary translation. Among his many specialized studies are books on Shakespeare and his contemporaries published at home and abroad. His are also a considerable number of verse translations including the major works of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, as well as two dozen books of his own poetry and essays.

Georgi Papanchev (1942) became a postgraduate student of English literature in 1969. His dissertation, *The Development of Internal Monologue in the English Novel of the Eighteenth and the Early Nineteenth Centuries* was defended in 1974. Two years before that Papanchev had already been appointed Assistant Professor at the Department and was promoted to Associate Professor in 1982 on the basis of continuing meticulous research in the forms of internal speech in the English novel. He taught courses in the history of English literature. In the mid-1980s, after a few years of lectorship at London University, he settled down in the UK as instructor of Bulgarian. Here he authored a successful self-teaching book of Bulgarian for English-speakers.

It could perhaps be said that from the early 1970s the makeup of the Sofia Department of English Philology started changing towards greater differentiation and compartmentalization. The traditional expectation that every member of the Department should be able at short notice to turn from one area of expertise to another was no longer valid. The previous versatility was gradually replaced by more and more narrow specialization both in research and in teaching assignments. In the literature section this development naturally resulted in a growing orientation to the burgeoning current trends in literary theory and their specific methodologies and jargons.

A number of new teachers entered the Department before the end of the decade. **Stefana Rousenova** (1946) and **Vesela Katsarova** (1944) became instructors in English at the Department of Foreign Languages in 1975 and soon were offered classes in the language course as well as in the history of literature for English majors, which eventually led to their transfer to the Department of English Philology. Subsequently they both taught core and advanced courses in English literature of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Stefana Rousenova had previously worked as translator at the National Radio. From 1980 to 1983 she was seconded as lector of Bulgarian language and literature at the University of Leeds, UK. In 1988 Rousenova defended her doctoral dissertation, *The Functions of Imagery for Character-portrayal in the Novels of D. H. Lawrence*, to become Associate Professor in 1998, and then, after the defence of a second dissertation, *Representations of Exile in J. Conrad, V. Nabokov, E. Hoffman*, to attain full professorship in 2010. She has contributed to journals and collections of essays with a particular focus on D. H. Lawrence. Her research interests range from minute stylistic analysis to the interaction of modern literature and politics.

Before her appointment at Sofia University **Vesela Katsarova** had worked for ten years as a school teacher and as English language instructor at the Medical Academy. Her dissertation of 1992 was devoted to *Susan Hill and the Problem of Alienation*. In 1998 Katsarova became Associate Professor with the monograph *From Neo-Victorianism to Postmodernism: Angus Wilson*, and after a second dissertation, *The Female*

Tradition in English Literature: George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, in 2010 was promoted to full professorship. She has published extensively on a variety of English-language novelists and poets, especially women writers such as Woolf, Lessing and Levertov, in parallel with their Bulgarian counterparts, but also on Dickens and on Thomas Hardy in comparison with Yordan Yovkov. Katsarova has made a name for herself as translator and popularizer of George Eliot, Dickens, Lawrence, Hardy and others.

In 1977 the English Department was joined by three new teachers: **Julia Stefanova** (1948), Zelma Catalan and Boika Sokolova. Stefanova's doctoral dissertation, *The Problem of Beauty in the Writings of Keats and Shelley*, was defended in 1980. In 1987 she became Associate Professor, teaching English literature of the eighteenth century and Romanticism. From 1993 to 2014 Dr. Stefanova served as executive director of the Bulgarian American Fulbright Commission, while continuing without interruption her teaching at Sofia University. Her contributions to academic conferences, journals and anthologies focus on the legacy of the Romantic poets. She has also translated literary and publicistic texts from Bulgarian into English and vice versa.

Zelma Catalan (1951) was first appointed as English language instructor and for a number of years she organized the work of teams of colleagues in this section of the Department, also coordinating innovative international projects. Catalan managed to combine language teaching with serious literary pursuits and in 2004 she defended a doctoral dissertation on *The Politics of Irony in Thackeray's Mature Fiction*. A number of her publications are devoted to Thackeray as a novelist, but she has also dealt with other Victorian and modern writers like Dickens, Browning and David Lodge. In 2011 Dr. Catalan became Associate Professor with the thesis *Tellability in Dickens's First-Person Novels*. Besides courses in English literature she has taught literary stylistics and translation.

Boika Sokolova's (1951) doctoral dissertation, *Shakespeare's Romances as Interrogative Texts* (defended in 1991) was published by Edwin Mellen Press in England. Her further publications, which have appeared mainly in Britain and the USA, almost invariably deal with Shakespeare, but more often than not they focus on the Bulgarian reception of his work. In 1994 she became the co-editor of the ground-breaking anthology

Shakespeare in the New Europe, and a few years later co-authored with A. Shurbanov the Delaware University Press book *Painting Shakespeare Red*. After teaching Renaissance literature at Sofia University for over twenty years, in 1998 she transferred to the University of Royal Holloway in London and has later taught English Renaissance literature there in the programmes of the Universities of Southampton, California and Notre Dame.

In 1979, after the defence of a dissertation titled *Dramatic Means of Characterization in the Novels of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding*, **Tatyana Stoicheva** (1946) joined the Department as Assistant Professor in English literature. Ten years later she became Associate Professor with *Trajectories of Satire: A Comparative Study of the Satirical Representation of Henry Fielding's Jonathan Wild and Luben Karavelov's Hadji Nicho*. Her second dissertation, *Bulgarian Identities and European Horizons*, was defended in 2007 and, together with *The Belgian Mantle and the Bulgarian Sheepskin Hat. European Influence and the Bulgarian Translations of Self and Other (1878 – 1912)*, earned her the rank of full Professor in the next year. Stoicheva taught English literature of the eighteenth century and in the early 1990s pioneered the teaching of cultural studies, a subject that has come to fruition thanks to her enthusiasm and persistence.

Vladimir Trendafilov (1955–2019) and Asparuh Asparuhov entered the Department in 1983, as if to mend the growing gender disbalance. Trendafilov had previously worked as editor at the Narodna kultura Publishing House. At the University he taught literary translation, stylistics, Victorian and modern literature. His doctoral dissertation *Current Bulgarian Reception of England, the Englishman and English Thought in the Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Century* was defended in 1996. In 2001 he left Sofia University to become language manager with the Bulgarski Text film translation company, and then, lecturer in English Literature at the Southwestern University. Here he was promoted to Associate Professor in 2005 with the thesis *The Dickens Debut: Initial Reception of the English Writer and His Work in Bulgaria*, and full Professor in 2011 with *The Uses of a British Mentor: The Reception of Charles Dickens in Bulgaria*. In 2013 Prof. Trendafilov returned to Sofia University. Besides being a recognized specialist in English literature, he was also an insightful commentator on the literary process in Bulgaria from the

National Revival to the present day, researcher of the history of literary reception, translator and editor of translations.

Asparuh Asparuhov (1958) has taught in a number of English literature courses from the Renaissance to the modern period. In 1996 he defended a doctoral dissertation titled *Metaphor, Symbol and Scene in Joseph Conrad's Early and Late Novels*. His thesis *Dialectic and Logicality in Ford Madox Ford's Novelistic Series* (Sofia University Press, 2016) brought him associate professorship. Dr. Asparuhov is the author of a number of publications on English drama and on the prose of Thackeray, Conrad and Ford. His special interest is in the poetics of the impressionist novel.

Evgenia Pancheva (1958) was appointed Assistant Professor in Medieval and Renaissance English literature in 1986 and in 1990 she defended her doctoral dissertation, *Shakespeare's Defences of Art: Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque*. In 2000 the thesis *Dispersing Semblances: An Essay on Renaissance Culture* earned her associate-professorship. She became full Professor in 2012 and in 2016 obtained the higher doctorate with the dissertation *Stasis and Ecstasy: Archaeologies of the Early Modern Self*. Prof. Pancheva has taught a number of courses on Early Modern literature and culture and on literary theory. In addition to her many publications on English literature, she is co-author of an impressive volume of introductions to *Theory of Literature: From Plato to Post-Modernism*. An accomplished translator and commentator of Renaissance, Neoclassical and Romantic poetry and drama, especially of Shakespeare and Marlowe, Pancheva has also translated a number of major Bulgarian texts into English.

Kornelia Slavova (1959) and Madeleine Danova started their academic careers simultaneously in 1987, when they both joined the Department of Foreign Languages only to transfer to the English Department a few years later and to specialize in American studies, literary and cultural. Slavova's research is mainly directed to the examination of modern American drama and its reception in Bulgaria as well as translation and gender studies. In 1998 she defended a doctoral dissertation titled *The Gender Frontier in Sam Shepard's and Marsha Norman's Drama* and in 2007 became Associate Professor with the thesis *The Traumatic Re/Turn of History in Postmodern American Drama at the Turn of the 21st Century*. A later thesis, *American Drama on the Bulgarian Stage:*

Theatre as Translation of Cultures, brought her the full professorship in 2015. Kornelia Slavova is an established translator of contemporary American plays and of humanitarian texts.

Madeleine Danova (1962) defended her dissertation, *Nationalism, Modernism, Identity: A Comparative Study of Two Literary Families, the Jameses and the Slaveikovs* in 1999, and in 2007 was made Associate Professor with a thesis titled *The Ethnic Occult in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. In 2012 she became full Professor with the monograph *The Jamesiad: The Postmodern Lives of Henry James*. Her publications cover a large area of American-Bulgarian comparative literary and cultural studies. She has also worked in the fields of Canadian and Australian studies. M. Danova has taught courses in the history of American literature as well as in American cultural studies and has created several interdisciplinary B.A. and M.A. programmes. She has also initiated and directed a number of ongoing academic projects.

Alexandra Glavanakova (1965) joined the English Department in 1991 as its youngest Americanist. In 2010 she defended her dissertation, *Transformations of the Body in Cyberspace: From Print Literature to Cyberliterature*, an original study sprung from her interest in the impact of digital technology on contemporary literature. Six years later Dr. Glavanakova became Associate Professor with the thesis *Transcultural Imaginings. Translating the Other, Translating the Self in Narratives about Migration and Terrorism*. She teaches American literature and culture.

Another dedicated Americanist, **Ralitsa Muharska** (1950) had started her teaching career at Sofia University in 1980 in order to transfer to the English Department in 1994 leading seminars in American literature and offering specialized literary and cultural courses. Her publications largely belong to the sphere of cultural studies.

In 1989 the Department recruited two new language instructors with pronounced interests in the study of English literature, **Maria Pipeva** (1961) and **Margarita Churova** (1952). The latter had in fact already taught here on a part-time basis. She defended her doctoral dissertation on *Iris Murdoch and Existentialism* in the same year and was offered classes in the literature course. However, soon after that she had to join her family abroad and left the Department for good.

Maria Pipeva obtained her doctorate in 2007 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2014. Her research has been conducted chiefly in the field of Modern and Postmodern English literature, the Bulgarian reception of English literature and literature for children. Dr. Pipeva's major publications are two books: *E. M. Forster's Novels: From the Monologic to the Dialogic* (2009) and *The Dialectic of the Domestic and the Foreign: The Bulgarian Translations of English Children's Fiction* (2014), the former representing her dissertation and the latter her habilitation thesis. She has taught courses in English literature from Modernism to Postmodernism and Children's literature, as well as in cultural studies and translation.

Kalina Filipova (1961–2006) became a teacher of translation, stylistics and creative writing in 1990. In 2004 she defended a dissertation titled *The Development of Joyce's Narrative Technique from Stephen Hero to Ulysses*. Joyce was the author to whom she devoted considerable time and thought, studying and discussing his work at domestic and international forums. Dr. Filipova was a gifted translator of English-language literatures into Bulgarian and of Bulgarian literature into English. An unfortunate accident took her far too soon away from the many who loved and admired her, and deprived the English Department of a capable, dedicated and charming colleague.

Filipina Filipova (1967) joined the Department in 1992 and endeavoured to set up an Irish studies programme. She has studied Jonathan Swift's work and its Bulgarian reception. Her monograph *Gulliver in Bulgaria or How Parody Travels* was published in 2007. In 2008 Filipova left the Department to become staff interpreter at the European Commission and, subsequently, at the European Parliament with four working languages: Bulgarian, English, French and Spanish. Our loss has been someone else's gain. Luckily, Irish studies, initiated by Kalina's and Filipina's work have continued to be part of the Sofia syllabus.

Lubomir Terziev (1962), graduate of Veliko Turnovo University, taught English at a language school and at the Institute for Foreign Students several years before entering the Sofia English Department in 1995 to teach English literature of the eighteenth century and Romanticism as well as the first course of creative writing. Since 2010 he has also worked as Adjunct Professor at the American University in

Blagoevgrad. In 2013 Terziev defended a doctoral dissertation, *Biographia Literaria and Literary Education (The Figure of the Poet-Educator)*. His research interests include the methodology of teaching literature at the university level. Lubomir Terziev pursuits combine academic and artistic interests. His richly suggestive poetry enjoys an appreciative readership.

Maria Dimitrova (1973) joined the Department in 1999 as Assistant Professor of English literature. She has also taught courses in Victorian literature, literary theory and methodology, stylistics, creative writing and practical English. In 2017 Dimitrova defended a doctoral dissertation titled *Private Treaties: William Empson's Notes to His Poems*.

Galina Avramova had taught English at Sofia University's Foreign Languages Department for four years before transferring to the English Department in 2002. In 2014 she defended a doctoral dissertation, *Problems of Identity and the Characteristics of Postmodern Narrative in Timothy Findley*. Most of her conference and journal contributions are connected with this topic. She can thus be credited, together with M. Danova and A. Glavanakova, with the introduction of Canadian studies at Sofia University.

Vesselin Budakov (1966), another graduate of the University of Veliko Turnovo, came to the Sofia English Department in 2007 after having taught English literature of the Enlightenment and Romanticism at the University of Shumen for 14 years. In his new position he continued to teach the same subject as well as English Victorian literature and American literature plus academic writing and methodological approaches to the literary text. His dissertation, *Home and Abroad: The Other in British Enlightenment Epistolary Prose* was defended in 2006. Dr. Budakov is a successful textual detective with internationally acknowledged publications.

Georgi Niagolov (1978) became Assistant Professor in English Renaissance literature in 2011 after the defence of his dissertation, *Shakespeare's Wordplay and Possible Worlds*. He has freshened the English Department's syllabus with a popular elective course, "Shakespeare through Performance." Dr. Niagolov has done a lot to develop the students' creative potential.

Angel Igov joined the English Department in 2012 after graduating from it and completing a course of postgraduate studies at

the Department of the Theory of Literature with a dissertation titled *Fictional Models of the City in Contemporary British Novels (Ian McEwan and Martin Amis)*. He teaches English literature and translation. Igov is also a successful novelist, literary critic and translator of contemporary British fiction and Romantic poetry.

In 2014 the Department was happy to welcome **Dr. Jonathan MacCreedy** as a teacher of practical English as well as of Irish literature and culture, thus continuing the done by colleagues in the preceding decades. His doctoral dissertation, *Narrating Sigla: A Genetic Study of Finnegans Wake* was defended at the University of Ulster in 2013.

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It may be said that in the period of growing specialization starting in the 1970s the following subdivisions of the Department's literary section have gradually come into being and continue to grow:

(English Medieval and Renaissance literature (Shurbanov, Pancheva, Sokolova, Staikova, Niagolov);

English literature of the Enlightenment and Romanticism (Stoicheva, Stefanova, Terziev, Budakov);

English literature from the Victorian Age to the present day (Papanchev, Rousenova, Katsarova, Trendafilov, Catalan, Pipeva, Asparuhov, Kalina Filipova, Churova, Dimitrova, Igov);

American literature and its context (Danova, Slavova, Muharska, Glavanakova);

Irish, Canadian and Australian studies (Filipina Filipova, McCready, Stratiev, Danova, Glavanakova and Avramova);

Comparative studies of English, American, Bulgarian and other literatures (Stoicheva, Katsarova, Rousenova, Danova, Dimitrova);

Literary reception (Shurbanov, Trendafilov, Pipeva, and others);

Literary stylistics (Shurbanov, Papanchev, Rousenova, Catalan, Asparuhov, Kalina Filipova, Dimitrova).

Several important directions have cropped up in addition to these. For a number of years Evgenia Pancheva has been introducing English majors to the full spectrum of classical and modern literary theory and a team of other teachers initiate them into a variety of methodologies. In the 1990s Tatyana Stoicheva pioneered the multifaceted discipline

of cultural studies and encouraged other faculty members to join her. Georgi Niagolov experiments in teaching literature through lively theatrical experiences. Creative writing has been taught by Lubomir Terziev and Maria Dimitrova.

Of course, the narrow specialization notwithstanding, many colleagues have doubled in other areas of literary and cultural studies both as scholars and as teachers. And we all know that such spreading out, as long as it is not excessive, can be refreshing, enriching and beneficial.

A number of distinguished British, American and European Professors of literature have lectured at the Department as invited guests. Among these I should mention at least a few: Samuel Schoenbaum, Jay Halio, Michael Hattaway, Gordon Campbell, Dieter Mehl, Balz Engler, Marta Gibinska, Susana Onega, Jina Politi, Francine Frank, Mariangela Tempera, Susan Gunter, Erik Kooper. To two Slavic scholars and good friends, Michael Holman and Ernest Scatton, we owe the invaluable opportunity of exchanging students and teachers with universities in the UK and the USA over a number of years. Well-known Bulgarian specialists in the field of English and American literature, such as writer and critic Atanas Slavov and translator Igljka Vasileva, have taught at the Department on a part-time basis.

In a brief survey of this kind it is impossible to encompass all the diverse activities of the literature people in the Department. Many of them have also taught at other universities in Bulgaria and abroad. Not a few have taught Bulgarian language and culture through the medium of English as lecturers at renowned universities in the UK and the USA. Among these are: Vladimir Filipov, Alexander Shurbanov, Julia Stefanova, Stefana Rousenova, Zelma Catalan, Georgi Papanchev, Tatyana Stoicheva, Kalina Filipova. At home several colleagues have devoted much of their time and ability to administrative work at the posts to which they were elected.

After Prof. Marco Mincoff, several other literature people served one or more terms of office as Head of the Department: V. Filipov, A. Shurbanov, J. Stefanova, T. Stoicheva, E. Pancheva. Two of this number, A. Shurbanov and M. Danova, have been Dean of the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies, to which the English Department belongs, and five more – G. Papanchev, J. Stefanova, V. Katsarova, M. Danova and

G. Niagolov – Associate Deans. Many have served for shorter or longer periods as members of the Faculty and Academic councils.

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Teaching English at the University of Sofia was started single-handedly 112 years ago by someone born in the 1870s. Now there are teachers in the English Department born in the 1970s and even in the 1980s. The ninety years that have elapsed since the establishment of English as a regular degree subject at our Alma Mater may seem an unimaginably long time, especially from the point of view of these youngest colleagues. It is and yet it is not so, if one person can claim to have known almost all actors in the play. This period can therefore be seen as just a beginning, the laying of the foundations of a longer and more meaningful development. Academic institutions take more than a century to mature. But looking back, we can say that not a little has been achieved during this time of gestation. From the initial, rather syncretic philological seed there have burgeoned a variety of specializations. The history of English literature has been segmented into a number of periods and each of us has been able to concentrate on one of them. The study of American literature has evolved as a separate division and Irish and Canadian literatures have started drawing attention to themselves. Literary studies have been filtered through a variety of theoretical perspectives and have expanded into the multifarious area of cultural studies, including comparative studies, reception, translation and pedagogy. This lively spread and diversification is undoubtedly invigorating but its centrifugal force can also lead to diffusion if a concerted effort is not made to make the centre continue to hold. The wide variety of individual specialization adds to the strength of the Department and increases the number of its valences, but if we would have an internationally recognizable Sofia School in the study of English-language literatures we should try to find a common interest in our research and combine individual diversity with a thrust in a collectively chosen direction. This is perhaps a task for the next ninety years, the return to an initial unity in the conditions of a vigorous multiplicity that will no doubt continue to grow and flourish.