

Yana Andreeva. *Literaturni prochiti na migratsiyata*. Sofia University Press, 2017. 343. ISBN 978-954-07-4351-6

Yana Andreeva's monograph *Literaturni prochiti na migratsiyata* (*Literary Readings of Migration*) is a timely contribution to the already expanding area of scholarship concerned with the problems of migration and its fictional articulations. The book, written in Bulgarian, explores the problematic location of migrant authorship in the context of Lusophone literatures and their social, cultural and political premises. The thematic scope of Andreeva's research is impressive not only as regards its ambitious and eloquent interpretation of a less accessible segment of the world literary landscape, but also because of the wide spectrum of interdisciplinary theoretical tools that enables Andreeva to cross between literary, historical, social, anthropological and philosophical spheres of experience.

Structurally, the book is divided in two parts. The critical eye floats in-between the Portuguese and the Brazilian perspectives on the historical, political and cultural aspects of migration, thus producing what might, at first sight, appear as a bifocal model of critical investigation. A closer look at Andreeva's research, however, reveals its "binocular" properties – the "Portuguese" and the "Brazilian" paradigms complement each other and operate simultaneously to project the discussed problem in its entirety. This binocular critical vision also serves to prevent the formation of "unhealthy" binarisms that might quite understandably result from the fact that the two geo-cultural directions of the discussed literature coincide with the positions of a former empire and its former colonies. This binary relationship is successfully dismantled by the analytical "spotlights" of the research which shed light on the individual dispersal of collective experience. Thus, all of the characters of the discussed novels are participants in a common experience that happens along both directions of Lusophone space. The latter enters the fictional worlds of literary space substantially transfigured, expanded and rendered extremely flexible by the processes of migration.

The problems of migration, migrant sensibility and self-location form the focal points of discussion in the introductory chapter of the book. The introduction asks the question of how reasonable it is to think about literature as a medium of creative self-location that becomes subsumed by its own imaginative responses to historical actuality. The analytical chapters argue convincingly and provide substantial evidence that reading literature produced by migrant writers offers insights into what lies beyond the aesthetic quests of such forms of writing. One of the major contributions of the book is this very attempt to free fiction from its fictionality which in many cases serves as the membrane of deeply-planted historical layers.

Andreeva argues that historicity is obvious in the case of migrant writing as the latter is, to some extent, bound to a historical process. Migration in its various forms has been integral to human individual and collective self-location for as long as the world has existed. From a historical perspective, it represents a form of human mobility that entails both "uprooting" and "re-grounding" in a way that sustains the "rootedness" of "roots," that is, the formation of hybrid, cross-border identities that "consume" diverse places, times and cultures. Fictional writing, itself a form of transcendental journey of ideas into words and collective into private experience (and vice versa), thrives on its natural affinity to migration. Literary works are, of course, textual migrants and their capacity to transcend borders (actual and imagined) makes them a valuable tool in the hands of migrant writers.

The book likewise benefits from its acknowledgement of the variable critical lens any academic investigation should wield if it seeks to study the multifarious characteristics of migrant writing. Andreeva's interdisciplinary set of critical paradigms turns out to be particularly helpful in her undertaking. At the same time, her work could have benefited from a more precise articulation of the critical terminology that she employs, particularly as regards the generic aspect of migrant texts. As she is mostly concerned with writers actively involved in the intense formation of migrant cultures, some theorization of concepts like "migrant writing" and "migration literature," where the former focuses on the biographical aspect of this type of writing while the latter points to its thematic concerns, would have lent a clearer shape to some of her theoretical instruments.

Even without this specification, Andreeva's academic effort is laudable and will enrich Bulgarian scholarship with its innovative and comprehensive approach. Its readers will find themselves on a meaningful

journey across Lusophone cultures and will meet a constellation of new authors some of whom have “migrated” into Bulgarian cultural space for the first time.

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Yarmila Daskalova. *Literary Pairs in Comparative Readings Across National and Cultural Divides*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018. 193. ISBN: 978-1-5275-1380-8.

From the very beginning of children’s introduction to the system of socialization they are subjected to intensive educational activities aimed at developing their discriminative skills. In kindergarten teachers would ask children to point the odd one out in a group of similar objects. They will repeatedly make boys and girls tell the solitary circle in a set of triangles, the blue star in the red constellation, or the lonely fruit out of a group of vegetables. Upon graduation (whatever the level of the educational system that has been completed), the ability to differentiate, though a valuable asset, is a skill perfected to automatism in each one of us. This automatism may occasionally prevent us from venturing into the realm of identifying parallels, likenesses and semblances and lead us to focus on differences and dissimilarities in objects, phenomena, and personalities. Even in the field of contemporary comparative literary studies, with its self-proclaimed interest in crossing cultural and linguistic borders and its adherence to a multi-faceted interdisciplinary approach to the literary text, seldom does a critical study appear that attempts to distort the balance of a comparative-contrastive dichotomy (in its analysis of texts and authors) in favour of the former rather than the latter. One such book is Yarmila Daskalova’s *Literary Pairs in Comparative Readings Across National and Cultural Divides*.

The book is a kaleidoscopic collection of essays, covering a time period of two centuries, encompassing literary samples from Romanticism to postmodernism, dealing with the works of ten authors, writing in four different languages, coupled in eight “pairs.” As the title suggests, it offers comparative readings of selected texts by authors from diverse literary, national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Rather than matching peers (in the sense of writers belonging to a common national tradition or sharing the common aesthetics of a single literary movement or cultural period), Daskalova undertakes the arduous project of “pairing” seemingly diverse constellations of prominent literary figures (British, Irish, American, French, Russian and Bulgarian) on the basis of the “similar typological schemes, perceptions and literary strategies” utilized in their works (3).

Under the seemingly random structure of the book, lurks a discernible hypertextual pattern, linking names of authors and intertwining cultural and mythological references into a complex postmodern poetic network. Thus, in the first essay William Butler Yeats is “paired” with his predecessor - the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The second essay compares the “one-man modernist” Edgar Allan Poe and his self-proclaimed French counterpart, the poet of *modernité*, Charles Baudelaire, on the basis of their “acute perceptibility of the weird and bizarre” and their shared predisposition to the “supernatural and melancholy aspects of life,” “the sinister and the macabre” (24).

The third essay offers a comparative critical reading of works by the nineteenth-century American *minuscule lyrique* Emily Dickinson and the twentieth-century Russian avant-gardist poet Marina Tsvetaeva. In it Daskalova traces “overlapping recurrent themes, visions, imagery and messages” in their verse, as well as “similar devices and approaches” employed by both authors for expressing their unique individualities.

In the fourth essay, the “pair” of voyagers, W. B. Yeats and Charles Baudelaire, undertakes an “inner exilic,” “dislocating” journey through the “menacing vastness of the sea” (99). Whether lacking a particular