

## Review

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**Fiction in the archives. The selection of facts and documents in scientific research. Contr. and edit. Andriana Spasova, Anna Alexieva, Boyka Ilieva, Nadezhda Alexandrova, Nikolay Zhelev, Slaveya Nedelcheva. Sofia, Publishing Centre “Boyan Penev”, 416 p., ISBN: 978-619-7372-84-7**

The collection *Fiction in the archives. The selection of facts and documents in scientific research*, published in May 2024, was completed and implemented within the framework of the scientific project for young scientists *Fictional and documentary in the Bulgarian prose of the XIX century. Analogies with foreign literature* with the support of the “Scientific Research” Fund, KP-06-M 70/2 of 13.12.2022. The goal of the team was to intrigue the Bulgarian philological community with the topic of the interaction between fact and fiction, myth and history, document and literature. As a result of the joint work and collegial collaboration of scientists from the *Bulgarian Society for the Study of the 18th Century*, it became possible to conduct an interdisciplinary scientific conference *Fiction in the archives. The selection of facts and documents in scientific research* on March 27, 2023. The conference gathered scholars and doctoral students concerned with the topics of the uses of documentary material in scientific interpretations of historical events and persons of the Revival period in Europe and the Balkans. Another important thematic center that provoked the interest of the participants was the role of interpretive echo, what effect an imprecise initial use or misuse of documentary sources can have, and how this type of reading leads to deeper levels of distortion of interpretations in more recent time.

The collected and peer-reviewed articles are expanded versions of the conference papers. The heterogeneous problems posed and the wide temporal scope of the texts predetermined their conditional arrangement. The reader himself discovers in the separate scientific observations the newly formed connections that bring to the fore the dialogue between difficult-to-communicate critical interpretations. The developments included in the publication concern both a more

comprehensive and theoretical understanding of key ideas, and focus on specific issues and analysis of works.

One part of the works is focused on the fiction in the archives, the interventions and the selection of the issued documents, the Revival literary-documentary heritage, the relation between historical and artistic works, the interweaving of fictional and documentary, the peculiarities of biographical and autobiographical writing. The topics of the articles in the collection are predominantly in the field of Bulgarian original and translated literature. They extend from the old Bulgarian manuscript tradition (D. Uzunova), through the South Slavic and Italian literary heritage of the 18th century (A. Spasova, L. Haralambieva), the Bulgarian Revival and new literature (N. Aretov, El. Azmanova-Rudarska) and foreign literary analogies (M. Pileva, S. Simeonov, S. Nedelcheva, S. Karadjova, Ts. Radulov) to the latest literature and the modern understanding of research approaches (73–90).

The intriguing theme of poetry, truth, and romantic adventures is explored and elaborated upon in the works of Ivan Vazov and Ivan Shishmanov's survey. This exploration highlights how documents enhance potential interpretations and lead to new readings of the familiar poems. The reissue of authentic evidence reveals traces of interventions and annotations, as noted in the paper "Truth And Fiction. Vazov's Love Life In PoEms And Documents" (17–36). Significant attention is given to interpretations related to 19th-century Bulgarian literature and culture (Pl. Antov, N. Alexandrova, N. Kapralova, M. Pileva, N. Mihova, N. Zhelev). Both historically and conceptually, the revival of the "noble savage" figure is analyzed first through a national-ideological lens, considering two crucial Bulgarian documents, "History of Slavonic Bulgaria" and the "Tarnovo Constitution" and then comparatively with the figure of the American Indian (87–120). The critical examination of history, popularity, and art concepts is evident in the detailed analysis of "Sistema mohamedanskaya i religiya ih" (Mohammedan system and their religion) and the additions by Sofroniy Vrachanski" (121–138).

Another focal point in the collection is the Bulgarian memoirs, journalism, and epistolary culture. The authors provoke reflections on significant questions, such as how to trace the convergences and divergences in the perspectives of those writing about and commenting on their context; the extent to which the memory of a witness is secondary; and how critical reception anticipates and responds to genre conventions during the Bulgarian Revival era. The issue of the

subjective nature of memory and the construction of the grand historical narrative for the “New Bulgaria” is examined through three lesser-known examples from the memoirs of Elisaveta Karaminkova, Sultana Racho Petrova, and Anna Stanchova (N. Kapralova). There are valuable literary-historical insights into the distinctions between private and official correspondence of the American missionary Dr. Albert Long, the role of letters as a borderline genre between literature and documentary, and the censorship of authentic documents during communist rule in Bulgaria (165–208). The hybrid genre and kaleidoscopic nature of Petko-Slaveykov's “Smesna kitka”, a revival edition challenging for scientific reflection, continue to engage modern readers (209–230).

The interpretation of Partenii Pavlovich's “Autobiography” (1757) highlights the metaphor mapping adventures to emphasize two figures – the religious (Orthodox) person and the world-traveling individual (371–396). The analysis of Vasil Drumev's “A Woeful Family” (1860) revisits the role of paratext and the preface's manifest function in provoking new reading attitudes and heralding a new stage of original fiction (397–410). The comparative analysis of two emblematic poems for Bulgarian and Albanian nationalism, Grigor Parlichev's “Skenderbeu” (1861) and Naim Frasher's “History of Skenderbeg” (1898), offers a certain relativization of ethnocentric ideological attitudes and fosters acceptance of the “other” (411–434). The specific examples on which the authors of the collection dwell also raise additional dimensions of the main problem – such interesting topics are the discursivity of memory, the pairing of modernity and countermodernity, the adventure as a narrative model, autopoetic instructions in Bulgarian Renaissance texts.

Several texts focus on handwritten documentary heritage, prompting discussions about various literary-historical and source studies. Ivan Grozev's monograph serves as a basis for proposing key discussion directions to the humanities community: how facts circulate in textual and intertextual horizons, the challenge of deification for scientific pursuits, the role of literary polemics, and the verification of authentic information, as well as how archival heritage shapes the puzzle of a “biographical assembly” (El. Azmanova-Rudarska). The collection also examines archival arrays' role, the development of photography, and the relationship with foreign repositories from the Renaissance period (Tz. Radulov); oriental literature and Idris Pasha's personal manuscript collection (N. Gramatikova); female literary vocality (Ada Negri) in the context of modern digital archives, and the transformation of the classic paper medium for the

virtual reader (L. Haralambieva); the first missionaries' stories and the reconstruction of context through the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith's archival documents (S. Karadjova); and the speaking archival materials of numerous artists such as Hristo Yassenov, Anna Kamenova, and the cultural events mosaic in Georgi Y. Nenov's life (37–50).

This volume gave the opportunity to researchers and scholars from various institutions (the Institute of Literature, the Institute of Balkan Studies, the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Southwest University “Neofit Rilski”, National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” etc.) to contribute and expand their discoveries. The thematic cores thus placed opened up a wider horizon of scientific research, covering the period between the 18th and 20th centuries. The goal of the team was to intrigue the Bulgarian philological community with the topic of the interaction between fact and fiction, myth and history, document and literature. The authors’ researches on the fiction in the archives shall continue to serve as a scientific temptation that provokes new interpretations and new intellectual discoveries.