



Opinion

by Prof. Dr. Amelia Licheva, Sofia University

for participation in a competition for "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (Western European Literature), announced by the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, State Gazette, no. 97 of 21.11.2023.

Candidate: Elitsa Staikova Dubarova-Petkova

For the announced competition in Western European literature from the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas there is one candidate - Assoc. Dr. Elitsa Dubarova-Petkova. Elitsa Dubarova is a lecturer there, and among the disciplines she teaches, besides Western European literature, are comparative literary studies, contemporary Bulgarian literature, narratology, genre studies, etc. I list them because the focus of her teaching explains the wide range of Dubarova's interests, as well as the diversity of the texts with which she is present in the public space. Moreover, for a competition for associate professor, no less important than the proposed publications are the teaching work and the professor's general engagement with educational issues. Few can boast of the latter, but Elitsa Dubarova is undoubtedly among them. To her is due the maintenance of the Petya Dubarova House-Museum as a living place of memory, as a centre for creative workshops and support for young authors. There are more than one or two names in the latest Bulgarian poetry who have started their creative path and made their debut, which helped them to move on, just from the competition named after Petya Dubarova, whose initiator and main realizer is Elitsa Dubarova. She is also the author of textbooks, participates in the compilation of tasks in Bulgarian language and literature and the conduct of the National Literature Olympiad. All in all, she works for the close link between secondary and higher education, without which no truly meaningful results can be achieved. In this direction, the roundtables that Dubarova organizes and her authored texts on Petya Dubarova's poetry are also important, because through them she contributes not only to the adequate analysis of Petya Dubarova, not only to the inscription of the poet in the canon, and in an unavoidable way, but also in a slightly broader sense - she gives directions for the reading of contemporary Bulgarian poetry and the traditions through which it is constituted.

An important moment of the mentioned discernment of Elitsa Dubarova's search is her ability to view Bulgarian literature through the lens of foreign ones, as well as to apply the theoretical body of knowledge in the field of genre studies and narratology to specific literary texts, which is also evident in her habilitation thesis. So I bring the broad thematic scope of the articles, with which prof. as. Dr. Elitsa Dubarova applied in the competition. And - of course - I stress that the candidate not only meets but also exceeds the minimum state requirements for the academic position of associate professor for which she is applying.

And insofar as the leading requirement for such a position is the presence of a habilitation thesis, I will try to briefly outline its contributions.

Robert Musil's work *Metanarrative Techniques in the Construction of the Novel The Man Without Qualities* is a serious study that has its significance not only for Bulgarian literary studies, but which also manages to contribute to the wider study of one of the most interesting and widely read modern writers. Dubarova's interest in an author of this period is not isolated in this country. A large wave of young Bulgarian literary scholars since the turn of the new century has been exploring modernist authors and trying to weave their voices into the global attempt to trace the modernist tradition to the present day. It is no coincidence that one of the attractive ideas for explaining our modernity is metamodernism, which specifically in relation to literature seeks out all possible projections of modernism in contemporary literature - at the level of themes, techniques, style, and even characters. Musil is not one of the most frequently mentioned names of writers by the proponents of metamodernism, but this does not negate the fact that modernism is very much alive and it is normal to provoke new and new research. Moreover, the aforementioned Bulgarian studies have as their focus mostly English-language modernism, with Virginia Woolf and James Joyce as their priority. In this sense, it is commendable that Elitsa Dubarova focuses on the less interpreted German-speaking modernists in the Bulgarian context. And although Dubarova's work is not about metamodernism, indirect research such as hers feeds the theses of the proponents of this current in contemporary humanities.

The second direction that Dubarova's work stimulates, again without being explicit in the work, is the interest in fictionalized biographies of modernist authors, which are an important part of the contemporary reading of modernism. These types of biographies weave together fact and fiction in interesting ways, pieces of biography, pieces of work, filling in with imaginative reconstructions. Michael Cunningham

and Colum Toibin are masters of this type of writing. The latter has similar biographies on Henry James, Edith Wharton, Thomas Mann. Of course, Elitsa Dubarova's research is literary and scientific, it is based on a broad analytical corpus, and yet it is not without moments in which the biographical is played with in interesting ways, in which fact and fiction are interwoven in a novel way, in which contexts and events intervene to become a key to reading. To come to one of the great themes of the study, which lies behind the question of how to think modernity, as more mimeticism or as a projection of the soul, and the answers the study tries to give through the analysis of *The Man Without Qualities*. Hence the debating of the novel's claim to function as a 'cognitive and cultural model of being and perceiving the world'.

It is a tribute to the work that a reasoned reading of this complex and multi-layered novel in its key and of its otherness also helps to see the multiplicity of modernity. As well as - of course - one of the great aims of the analysis, rightly identified by the author herself as contributory - the desire not to read it as unambiguously utopian. Contributing to this is a detailed look at irony and its connections to the crises of the time, the relativism of history and moral relativism, the parodic imitation of the dominant scientific paradigms (psychoanalysis, essentialist criminology and anthropology), and some of the major narrative models - the essay, the quotation, and in general - the whole layer of the meta-novel.

A virtue of the text is the skillful close reading of the novel, with an emphasis on narratological reading, combined with distant reading that contextualizes, that takes into account the time, historical events, and tradition. In this sense, I would say that the work demonstrates a good fusion between theorism and historicism, a very good knowledge of both the foreign and the native tradition is evident in Musil's reading, and I will stress it again - the desire and the ability for one's own reading direction.

Taking into account the excellent work done, as well as the outstanding qualities of Elitsa Dubarova as a teacher and researcher, I propose to the Honorable Faculty Council of the University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" - Burgas, to award to Assoc. Dr. Elitsa Dubarova-Petkova the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.1. Philology (Western European Literature).

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