

REVIEW

by Dobromir Grigorov Grigorov, Associate Professor in Czech and Slovak Literature
in the Faculty of Slavic Studies at Sofia University
"St. Kliment Ohridski ", PhD in Philology,
of materials submitted for the competition
for occupying the academic position "Professor"
at the Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski”

Higher Education Area - Humanities; professional field 2.1. Philology (Slavic
Literatures)

Associate Professor Zhorzheta Petrova Cholakova from the Faculty of Philology at the Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski” participates as a candidate in the competition for the academic position "Professor" announced in the State Gazette, issue 31, April 12, 2019, for the needs of the Department of Slavic Studies in the Faculty of Philology, Plovdiv University „Paisii Hilendarski”

1. General presentation of materials for the competition

Materials for the competition submitted by Zhorzheta Petrova Cholakova are in conformity with the requirements of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Plovdiv University and include all documents indicated in the application to the Rector of the university, as follows: an application to the Rector; CV in European format; diploma of higher education; diploma for a degree of Candidate of Science, issued by Charles University in the Czech Republic and accompanying certificate of diploma from the Higher Attestation Commission of the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria; certificate of a scientific title from the Higher Attestation Commission from 2000; diploma of scientific degree “Doctor of Science” in professional field 2.1. Philology (Theory and History of Literature); a complete list of the applicant's scientific publications; a list of publications submitted for participation in the present competition; reference for compliance with specified requirements of the Faculty of Philology at the Plovdiv University; declaration of originality and authenticity; a list with abstracts of each of the publications with which the applicant participates in the competition (with attached English translation); two official abstracts from records of the Department of Slavic Studies of the Plovdiv University, of records of the meeting of the Faculty Council in the Faculty of Philology and of a protocol of the Academic Council of the Plovdiv University with decisions announcing the competition for the scientific position "professor"; announcement of the competition in the State Gazette of April 12, 2019; a certificate of teaching experience of the applicant at the Plovdiv University; two

documents related to the applicant's teaching work, including teaching mobility and guidance for graduate and doctoral students.

Documents relating to the artistic activity of the applicant, to her participation in several national research projects, one international scientific education project, international editorial boards of scientific journals in France, Poland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well to her editorial work in the team of Scientific Papers of the Plovdiv University, the journal "Slavic Dialogues (Plovdiv)" and collective scientific monographs are also attached.

Zh. Cholakova is an editor in authoritative periodicals in Bulgaria and abroad and indisputably contributes to their high scientific level. Professional qualification in the field of competition presents Zh. Cholakova as an established professional, experienced teacher and mentor.

1. Evaluation of the applicant's research activity

The submitted publications for the competition are: a monograph ("Poetics of Melancholy. Karel Hynek Mácha"), Plovdiv: University Press „Paisii Hilendarski”, 2019), eighteen studies and articles published in Bulgaria and abroad, in Bulgarian, French, Czech, English, German and Slovak language.

Studies and articles

The studies and articles examines vast literary material, and the publications have been included in prestigious scientific editions - collective volumes from Bohemian congresses in the Czech Republic and authoritative collective monographs in Bulgaria.

The split mind is a research topic in early articles written by Zh. Cholakova. The split mind is an intellectual challenge provoked by an exile - the theme of an article dedicated to Milan Kundera's eternal return as a metaphor of exile. An enduring interest in Baroque culture directs the author to an equally challenging question: how a person of art of the baroque reflects the earthly world, while at the same time distances from the empirical picture left beyond the only indisputable source of inspiration and spiritual enlightenment.

The myth of Orpheus is the subject of three articles by Zh. Cholakova: the first one is devoted to the metamorphoses of the mythological figure in the poetry of the early Czech Revival till the late 20s of the 20th century; the second one focuses on the digression in reading the myth in the poem „A Night with Hamlet" by Vladimír Holan, and the third one highlights Orpheus as one of the iconic mythological figures in the Central European

cultural space. The connecting thread in three texts is a deliberately sought transformation of the meanings with which we associate the classical plot in the myth's interpretation. Each of its later interpretations inevitably leads to the need of identifying and justifying new meanings. The successful research topic examined by Zhorzheta Cholakova is the re-reading of the myth in the narrative poem „A Night with Hamlet" of Vl. Holan, whose dramaturgy interprets the history of Orpheus and Eurydice as a poetic reflection of the ontological value of the largest war in human history till now. At the same time, the digression of the original plot reveals the disharmony of human being that cannot be localized in time and space.

The unquiet consciousness of the searching human spirit characterizes one of aesthetic corrections of zenitism - the return to the primitive conception of the world as evidence of the fact that some avant-garde authors abandon the position of the observer, enter into a primitive cultural consciousness, and reflect the present day with its modern definition of civilization.

The literary avant-garde's context is a starting point of Zh. Cholakova's article on the early poetry of Vl. Holan - the topic of the study is its formation in an extremely diverse environment of an aesthetic multilingualism. The contribution of the text in literary history is the distinction of the ontological reality in relation to poetic reality of Vl. Holan. This distinction explains the contrast between the reader's expectations and the poet's rejection of aesthetic programs' models from the interwar decades of the 20th century.

In one of her articles, published and written in French, Zh. Cholakova pays special attention to the genealogy of the literary avant-garde in Slavic literatures. The text problematizes literary contactology as one of the constructive factors of the interwar European culture. The article examines Polish and Czech material, while the supranational framework is complemented by the links between Romanticism and its concrete manifestations made by the literary avant-garde of the 20th century.

Memory and non-memory are the functional fields which construct reality in the literary avant-garde - the subject of analysis is the novel „Valerie and Her Week of Wonders" by Vítězslav Nezval. The article describes the functional characteristics of the cultural memory as an instrument of differentiation of surrealistic characters, while literary memory is built on mythological, folklore and literary primary models.

The history of the Czech poetic avant-garde is reconstructed through the evaluation of melancholy as an artistic view of the world in the poetry of V. Nezval during the 1920s. The melancholy is one of the arguments in seeking the collectivistic spirit of the new art. The poet V. Nezval was formed both in searching the new European standards and in distancing from the traditional melancholy of Romanticism.

Zh. Cholakova pays special attention to the poetry of Jaroslav Seifert. As a synthesis of delicate sensitivity and capacity for intellectual insights, J. Seifert's social melancholy

was institutionally valued with the Nobel Prize in 1984. The reason for that is in the view for poetry language as an integral part of social activity of the person.

The poetry of Otokar Březina is certainly one of the serious challenges facing Zh. Cholakova; she repeatedly returns to it - in translations and scientific publications. One of them is presented in this competition and is dedicated to the ontological image of death in O. Březina's poetics. This is one of the most serious studies of the author till now. Death in O. Březina's figurative world is materialized as a symbolic, poetic language, which translates death as a transcendent phenomenon, as a category in the language of the sensuous world. It is an act of reducing the unknown to a system of familiar images. Thus, Cholakova's polemical article explains how one of his typical projections of death does not meet the traditional expectation for catastrophic apocalyptic decoupling and leads to the purification in its unsubstantial (non-corporeal) delineations.

The last two studies which I will emphasize in this review are: a study on the religious type of melancholy as an essential characteristic of engaged human consciousness in its ethical boundaries and intellectual contradictions - this text is a part of the monograph "Poetics of Melancholy. Karel Hynek Mácha" (2019) presented for the competition; another study examines the mythopoietic genesis of the balladized landscape and new interpretations of the reborn Ossian. The intersection of two texts is a rethinking of genre conventions that marks the transformation of inherited cultural heritage.

"Poetics of Melancholy. Karel Hynek Mácha"

The subject of the book is two phenomena of different order

The first phenomenon, melancholy, with its psychomotor and artistic dimensions, is explored by Zh. Cholakova as a concept that has already been articulated in ancient culture. The origin of the term implies a reconstruction of its changing meanings. Firstly, Zh. Cholakova clarifies the differences between past and present meanings of melancholy, and secondly, examines the semantic capacity of contemporary definitions. In fact, the monograph focuses on the cultural translatability of the ancient concept of melancholy from the Middle Ages to the 19th century in order to find a successful heuristic approach to the comprehension of cultural history. Melancholy is a connecting thread that outlines a long history of knowledge. Zh. Cholakova describes not only conflicts but also the continuity in this history, the "synthesis of differences", typical for the "demiurge of knowledge" (as M. Foucault says). The author does not succumb to temptations suggested by the history of ideas. This allows the exploitation of the research potential of literary history, which could remain with the status of illustrative material in the hierarchy of values of Anglophone history of ideas. Melancholy is analyzed as a significant part of the history of knowledge and can materialize itself in its historically changing definitions as well as in a specific author's voice. This is the first serious argument that legitimates the correlation of the concept to Karel Hynek Mácha's poetry.

The second phenomenon in the book is the aesthetics of K. H. Mácha. Zh. Cholakova repeatedly returns to this literary material, both as a translator and as a researcher. In the early 1990s, she published the first edition of her translation of the poem “May”, having already known in detail the specifics of literary Romanticism in the programs and practice of Czech surrealism from the 1930s. In other publications Zh. Cholakova returns to manifestations of literary Romanticism, but outlines a much broader contextual field that transcends national literary boundaries. In the long and rich history of reading K. H. Mácha, Zh. Cholakova offers a radical turn - the interpretation of individual style through the history of melancholy allows new research procedures. Firstly, the characteristics of melancholy implement the potential of receptive aesthetics, with which we describe the revival of Antiquity in later cultural layers, but not as self-contained or enclosed in their internal intellectual contradictions. Secondly, the autonomous world of the aesthetic, as an important part of the Romanticism’s identity, is legitimized as an integral part of the complex knowledge of the world, but does not contradict the program self-identification of the romanticists.

The contributions of Zh. Cholakova's book are conditioned by the choice of two other methodological decisions: disassociating from restrictive self-restraints of Slavic literary studies, which could leave off the European artistic tradition and the European history of concepts; cultural Eurocentrism is understood outside the colonizing authority of so-called "big" literatures. This choice frees the study from the necessity to prove the belonging that associates the creative individuality to European cultural history.

“The Poetics of Melancholy” examines facts and processes that play a key role in the Czech national canon and the modern national cultural mythology. The collective cultural memory is quite sensitive to the figure of K. H. Mácha and mainly Czech scientists are expected to study his works. Therefore, the contributing scientific work of Zh. Cholakova is the result of many years of work on the subject of the research and the high professional ethics of argumentation.

In conclusion, I declare with conviction my positive evaluation of the entire research and teaching work of Zhorzheta Cholakova and suggest to the scientific jury that the candidate be selected for the academic position "Professor" at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" in the professional field 2.1. Philology (Slavic literatures).

Sofia
25.08.2019

Reviewer:
(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dobromir Grigorov)