

ASSESSMENT

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- For the materials submitted for participation in the competition for the academic position of Professor of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences; professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Studies (Cultural Studies - Historical Anthropology of Political Culture).

- In the competition for professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 39 of 2.05.2023, and on the Internet page of Plovdiv University <https://procedures.uni-plovdiv.bg>, for the needs of the Department of Ethnology of the Faculty of Philosophy and History with the only candidate Assoc. Prof. Dobrinka Dragieva Parusheva, PhD, Department of Ethnology, Plovdiv University.

1. General presentation of the procedure and the applicant. The procedure complies with all legal requirements and the provisions of the Plovdiv University Regulations, deadlines, layout and content of the documentation. The only candidate in the competition is Assoc. Prof. Dobrinka Parusheva, PhD, from the Department of Ethnology of the Faculty of Philosophy and History. She graduated in History at Sofia University (1983); In 1990 she defended her doctorate at the Institute of Balkan Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where she was habilitated in 2009, and since 2010 she has been an associate professor of theory and history of culture in the Department of Ethnology at Paisii Hilendarski University. She has excellent foreign language skills, organizational and administrative skills, fruitful teaching activity and high scientific reputation. As the attached reference shows, the minimum national requirements for the award of the academic position of a Professor are fully met.

2. General description of the applicant's activities

A) Teaching Activities. At the Faculty of Philosophy and History Assoc. Prof. Parusheva teaches 7 BA, 3 MA and one doctoral courses in a wide thematic range, covering history, anthropology and culture. In addition, since 2012, she has three elective courses, also three Erasmus courses in English. Alongside this busy lecturing schedule, between 2011-2015 the candidate gave individual lectures at universities in Eskisehir, Prague, Ljubljana and Regensburg. Her work with students is at a high level in terms of their scientific development - since 2012 Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has supervised 6 BA and one MA theses, as well as a total of 7 PhD theses under the joint PhD program of the Paisii Hilendarski University with the Technical University of Eindhoven and Charles University in Prague and the PhD program in Social Anthropology at the Paisii Hilendarski University, and two of her successfully defended PhD students are now lecturers at the University.

B) Research Activities. The materials attached to the competition for professor show the respectable research activity of Assoc. Prof. Parusheva. Since her habilitation (2009), she has presented papers at 13 national and 35 international scientific conferences; she has participated in five national and seven international research projects, and in addition, she has supervised two projects for students and young scholars; she is a member of two national and three international

reputable academic organizations and is a member of the editorial boards of four reputable academic journals; her expertise also appears in her participation in 23 academic juries since 2012 and in six international academic expert committees and evaluation panels. The candidate is the author of two monographs (2008 and 2023), 62 articles and studies since 1991, published in Bulgarian, English, German and French, and 15 reviews. There are over a hundred citations and references to her work.

For the competition for the professorship Assoc. Prof. Parusheva has presented the monograph *"Down with the Government!": Politics, Culture and Caricature in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (2023) and 12 articles published in the period 2012-2023 in prestigious journals and collections. They reflect three of the main thematic focuses of the candidate's scholarly work - the formation of political elites and informal networks of political life, visual culture and urban (and Balkan) studies. The scholarly contributions of these texts are unquestionable and are precisely stated in the self-evaluation of contributions to the competition documentation.

Dobrinka Parusheva's monograph is a fruitful study of the role and place of caricature in the Bulgarian political imaginary from the early twentieth century until the wars. The choice of the guiding concept is theoretically argued and laid in a number of other conceptual intersections - of politics, culture, political culture, visual culture, image, representation, etc. Their general conceptual work is carried out throughout the study, but here it will be illustrated, for example, in the conclusion that the level of Bulgarian political culture in those years *"was the reason why political caricature in Bulgaria at the beginning of the twentieth century reflected politics and followed it rather than guiding and leading public opinion. This made it a rewarding object for the study of the content of the political imaginary and its change"* (p. 236).

These conceptual bindings offer broad interdisciplinary potentials to research. Of them all, the author chooses above all the intersection of cultural history with political history, and analyses the political imaginary embodied in caricature by juxtaposing it with a detailed reconstruction of the historical and political context, and in so doing the factual references of caricature clarified. This is a necessary condition for its (especially today's) understanding, since caricature is by definition hostile to its specific context and is meaningfully determined by it (among verbal journalistic genres, such as the feuilleton). And if there's one thing I am missing in the detailed reconstruction of the connections between the cartoon image and the factual context, it is a typologizing or historicizing look at the "titles" and/or explanatory texts beneath the caricatures in their role as mediators of understanding, clarifying their roles and stylistics, or, conversely, diverting and distracting reference - from direct reference through irony, inversion, etc. and from the indicative ironic clarification, e.g. "Serbian

cultural activity in Macedonia" (1914, 1.43), through direct speeches and explanatory but also displacing dialogues - to, for example, a stanza from a very popular 1898 children's poem by Chicho Stoyan (Stoyan Popov) (authorship unidentified), referred in a Chudomir cartoon to Vasil Radoslavov's election result (1914, 2.41).

Along with reconstructing the political contexts of the signified in caricature, the monograph also constructs a cultural history of the caricature signifier - from the founding role of Alexander Bozhinov and "Bulgaran", through "Baraban", "Smiah", etc., to the early Rayko Alexiev and Chudomir. The main caricature and political subjects: elections, conflicts, wars, and their metonymic figures - the politician and the prince/king - are explored. Especially important is the classical anthropological theme - the image of the Other, explored in the monograph in at least three directions: The Other in the usual hostile connotations and zoomorphic depictions; The Other in the seamless transfer of foreign caricatures and caricaturists adapted to the Bulgarian political context; The Other in the clash of the depicted self and the foreign, as evidenced by the fascinating story of the conflict between the depictions of the Sultan in "Vecherna Poshta" by Alexander Bozhinov and by a French caricaturist who failed to meet the expectations of the editor and the Bulgarian public in 1901-1902.

I also acknowledge my personal research interest in another interdisciplinary direction set by the monograph of Assoc. Dobrinka Parusheva - *"Literary satire complements caricature very well and the two together both support and represent the Bulgarian political imaginary"* (p. 156). The conclusion is on the occasion of Aleko Konstantinov's "Bai Ganyo Makes Elections" and immediately raises the following question: if on the topic of elections the 90s of the 19th century in the face of Aleko Konstantinov and the quoted in this place in the monograph Konstantin Irecek, so up to 1914, when Chudomir draws Vasil Radoslavov and his cane-baby, explained through the poem of Chicho Stoyan, the *"notions of elections formed in the public space"* (p. 155) remain valid, does this mean that literature and caricature continue to pronounce similar statements? I would refer to the line in the monograph that arguably formulates the end of the generalized "Grandma Europe" in caricature during the wars, i.e. it traces that historical process in which *"it is now abundantly clear that there is a rift between the large, important states playing a major role in European and Balkan politics"* (pp. 138-139), due to which the caricature construct of the generalized Europe disintegrates into separate and different images of states. At the same time, however, literature firmly retains the generalization "Europe," and the First World War gave this generalization strong negative connotations. It was then that literary reception transformed Aleko's Bai Ganyo - against the will of its author - into a "positive character", into the radiant baboon and civilizational victor we know from jokes until the end of the twentieth century, and in subsequent victorious political

incarnations. What accounts for this divergence between caricature and literature - whether it is only the principled generalizability of literature and the principled belonging of caricature to the particularities of context, or other important reasons - is a question we can hardly answer immediately. And if I raise it here, it is only to underline once again the monograph's broad and deep interdisciplinary potentials.

3. Critical comments and recommendations. Since I find the contributions of the monograph and the other publications presented by Assoc. Prof. Parusheva to be significant, I have no critical remarks and recommendations that could be relevant to the competition procedure.

4. Conclusion. Having read the materials and scientific works presented in the competition and analyzed the contributions contained therein, I give my positive assessment, recommending the Scientific Jury to prepare a report to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the selection of Assoc. Dobrinka Parusheva to the academic position of "Professor" in the following fields of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences (Cultural Sciences - Historical Anthropology of Political Culture).

27 September 2023

Plovdiv

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