

R E V I E W

by Alexandra Glavanakova, PhD.,
Associate Professor in American literature and culture
at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”
regarding the selection procedure for the academic position of
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

in the Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities
Professional Field: 2.1. Philology (Literature of the peoples of Europe,
America, Asia and Australia - English and American literature),
North American Literature (English)
at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

1. Details of the selection procedure

The procedure for the position of Associate Professor was announced in SG no. 96 / 17.11.2023, in the Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities; Professional Field: 2.1. Philology (Literature of the peoples of Europe, America, Asia and Australia - English and American literature), North American Literature (English). Dr. Galina Avramova is the only candidate for this academic position. The candidate has submitted all the required documents by the deadline. The review of the provided documentation and the enclosed evidence indicate that Dr. Avramova meets the eligibility conditions for the position of Associate Professor set forth in the minimum national requirements under the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

2. Candidate's Data

The candidate is a graduate of Sofia University with a bachelor's and a master's degree in English Philology. She earned a doctoral degree from the same university in 2014 with a dissertation entitled “Problems of Identity and the Features of Postmodern Narrative in Timothy Findley's work.” From 1998 she was an assistant professor at the Department of Foreign Languages at Sofia University, and since 2002 she has been a lecturer at the Department of English and American Studies of Sofia University, where she has held the position of senior assistant professor since 2011.

3. Teaching activity

Apart from courses in General English, the candidate conducts lectures and seminars in American literature, and several courses related to Canadian Studies: Canada: culture, society, politics, Multiculturalism in Canadian Literature, Popular Literature in Late Twentieth-Century North America and the Origins of Metafiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Post-feminism, and, at the graduate level, the course Canada: Culture and Literature. The areas of teaching of Dr. Avramova overlap with her academic interests, reflected in her publications, and correspond to the area of the position she is applying for.

4. Description of the candidate's scholarly publications

For the purposes of the present selection procedure for the position of associate professor Dr. Avramova has submitted twelve publications in total, including the monograph *Images of War. American and Canadian Novels of the Second World War*, Sofia, 2023. These publications fit the profile of the position she is a candidate for; in addition to the monograph submitted for the habilitation, three of them deal with issues of Canadian cultural identity and the role of multiculturalism, alongside the topic of the literary canon and the notion of world literature. Six of the publications presented are related to and build on the candidate's research related to the topic of her PhD thesis.

I intend to focus only on the monograph submitted for the current habilitation procedure. In the monograph, Dr. Avramova discusses novels that deal with the theme of war. The study focuses on several skillfully selected novels by English-language authors dealing with the aftermath of World War II: *The Naked and the Dead* by Norman Mailer (1948), *Paragraph 22* by Joseph Heller (1961), *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut (1969), *A Midnight Clear* by William Wharton (1982), and *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatji (1992). The novels share the theme of war, presenting various aspects of it with a shared anti-war pathos, while focusing on key ethical questions about the cost of human life in times of conflict and crisis. The candidate has opted for a comparative approach: she highlights the common points in the war images the novels represent, while also focusing on the differences at the level of genre, character development, form, and imagery.

Dr. Avramova clearly articulates the purpose of her study: rethinking war in physical, spiritual, and sociocultural terms in order to explore „the human condition in crisis situations“ (p. 42). Her analysis begins with the broader context that includes important critical reflections on war in the introductory chapter of her monograph. In the analytical chapters she engages in discussions of the related themes of fragmentation of identity, of the the distortion of time and space, the images of the army, the images of women. In the comparative analysis of the chosen works of special importance are the candidate's observations reinforcing the thesis of the necessity of de-heroizing war, discussing militarism in relation to the vulnerable human corporeality, positioning it in the context of the interplay between man and technology, and in contrast to its possible alternatives in times of (relative) peace. The analysis proceeds mainly at the thematic level and in search of the concrete imagery in the novels problematizing war-related concepts and realities.

5. Scientific contributions

What is striking is the care with which the text of the monograph rethinks the posited (un)/avoidability of war and overcomes stereotypical and restrictive portrayals of war. Regarding the aims that the text sets itself, these are already half-fulfilled because of the particular historical moment of its

publication. This is not just an extremely timely analysis of literary reflections on war presented in a passionate and multi-layered philosophical-ethical discourse, but also a much-needed insight into the arguments and justifications that present war as an inevitability. Some purely technical omissions in the text are noticeable: for example, in the bibliography the translators's names of the texts from English in Bulgarian have been omitted, and the pages of the quotations from the novels are missing.

The goal that Dr. Avramova set for herself has been fulfilled. The contributions of the monograph are to be found in the relevance of the subject matter, in the interdisciplinary approach, in the skilful selection of the texts under consideration and in the comparative multifaceted analysis of the specific material.

6. Conclusion

Based on the overall academic activities, research, publications and teaching, I give my support to Dr. Galiva Avramova for the position of Associate Professor in the Area of Higher Education: 2. Humanities Professional Field: 2.1. Philology (Literature of the peoples of Europe, America, Asia and Australia - English and American literature), North American Literature (English) at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski."

March 15, 2024

Assoc. Prof. Alexandra Glavanakova. PhD.